WITH THE SWAMIS IN AMERICA
BY
SWAMI ATULANANDA

WITH THE SWAMIS IN AMERICA AND INDIA

SWAMI ATULANANDA

With a Foreword
by Swami Swahananda

Edited by Pravrajika Brahmaprana



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CONTENTS

PART I

SWAMI ATULANANDA

PART II

WITH THE SWAMIS IN AMERICA

PART III

LETTERS

PUBLISHER'S NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION OF PART II

The first edition of this book has long been out of print. During the last few years, requests have been coming to us to reprint it. After a lapse of nearly fifty years, the second edition of this book is seeing the light of day with two words added to the original title. The reason for this edition becomes clear as the reader glances through the contents of this book. The first edition was published under a pseudonym of its author. In this edition, the author's name has been revealed—Swami Atulananda.

We are now able to include in this second edition a brief biographical sketch of the swami and some select letters of his, thanks to the interest evinced by Swami Swahananda, head of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, U.S.A., and to the devoted and painstaking work of the editor, Pravrajika Brahmaprana, who is a nun of the Sarada Convent, Santa Barbara, California, under the guidance of Swami Swahananda. We wish to express our heartfelt thanks to both of them and other collaborators in this noble venture.

Advaita Ashrama
Mayavati, Pithoragarh, Himalayas
February 19, 1988

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Advaita Ashrama
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FOREWORD

Many swamis in the Ramakrishna Order still fondly remember Swami Atulananda (Gurudas Maharaj). I met him on several occasions while in India, and remember vividly his bright, blue eyes and sweet, childlike smile. Gurudas Maharaj was simple, calm, and serene. Because he was such an outstanding monk, many people came to him for inspiration. Once in the New Delhi center, I was requested by the head of his center to send a brahmachari to serve Gurudas Maharaj during his last days. That brahmachari, who is now a swami, remains specially grateful for having had that wonderful opportunity—so inspiring was Gurudas Maharaj's life.

Swami Atulananda's forbearance and compassion showed a high level of spiritual attainment. When he was young he broke his back in an accident, suffering from the effects of that injury for the rest of his life. But Gurudas Maharaj never complained or allowed it to become a handicap to his spiritual life. Furthermore, there was once an attempt to send away an arrogant novice who was attending on him, but Gurudas Maharaj objected by saying, "No, it is my fault. I should have been able to make him change."

The first part of this book contains a biographical sketch of Gurudas Maharaj.

The second part of the book was originally published under the title *With the Swamis in America*. In this section we get an

idea of the close relationship Gurudas Maharaj shared with some of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna who came to America. It also presents the first model Vedanta retreat in America. Established on solid, character-building spiritual principles, the Shanti Ashrama is a reminder of the need for solitude and quiet in the West and a symbol of the ancient, Eastern style of retreat, based on meditation, renunciation, service, study, and spiritual training under a qualified teacher. To quote Gurudas Maharaj from his article "Swami Turiyananda at the Shanti Ashrama," published in the April 1929 issue of the *Prabuddha Bharata*:

> To those who lived with Swami Turiyananda at the Shanti Ashrama, it is a sheer delight to call those days to memory again. The Swami was in the prime of manhood, energetic and filled with enthusiasm. He realized the need of a peace retreat in the West where life is intense, where with a high material standard of living, the mind is constantly drawn outward, where worldly ambitions and demands call for endless activity, where the spirit is drowned in an ocean of worldly pursuits. He found in the West a restlessness of mind he had hardly imagined even to exist. But he also recognized that given the proper directions these same minds, alert, quick to understand, tenacious in their purposes, could under proper training become worthy of his attempt to lead them into spiritual channels. He therefore gave himself heart and soul to this task. He never spared himself; he did not think of his own health or comforts; he had only one object, namely, to bring these eager students to the feet of his Divine Master.

The third part of this book contains excerpts from letters Gurudas Maharaj wrote from both India and America. In this section we catch a glimpse of his depth of character and his insight into spiritual life. We also see how these qualities enabled him to overcome difficulties and make the adjustments necessary for a Christian-raised Westerner embracing Eastern monastic life. In this connection, he once wrote:

> What *I* think of Swami Turiyananda or of India, matters very little indeed, except to *myself*. The question that really matters is, How far have I personally been able to appreciate the greatness of the Swami and the real worth of India; how have I been affected, how have I profited, what have I gained by coming in contact with a singularly great personality, a man of staunch character, of deep spiritual realization? How did my nature respond to the remarkable experience of living in India with her complex, ancient civilization, a civilization, if not on the surface always, at least at heart, perhaps, the noblest civilization of the world today? What have I been able to assimilate, what have I absorbed, made my own, how was my character affected, my life molded? The serious question is this: "Has it brought me closer to God?"

Throughout this book and especially in his letters, where Gurudas Maharaj candidly opens his heart to his reader, we are able to find our own answers.

SWAMI SWAHANANDA

Vedanta Society
of Southern California
1946 Vedanta Place
Hollywood, California

EDITOR'S PREFACE

At noon on January 31, 1955, Ida Ansell passed away at the Vivekananda Home of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, leaving behind a treasury of letters from Swami Atulananda (Gurudas Maharaj) and other memorabilia, the contents of which have been the moving spirit behind this book.

Since chronicles have always been one of the most valid forms of history, these letters written by Gurudas Maharaj to Ujjvala (Ida Ansell) are some of the earliest records of the Ramakrishna-Vedanta Movement in the West, and they continue in Gurudas Maharaj's strong narrative voice to encompass an era "with the swamis" in America and also in India. Altogether 250 letters of Gurudas Maharaj were found, dating from September 20, 1901 to August 14, 1954, spanning a period of nearly six decades. Since Swami Atulananda lived both in America, at the Shanti Ashrama and the San Francisco center, as well as at the monasteries of the Ramakrishna Order in India, his letters, which are full of reminiscences, reflections, and observations, provide us with an eye-witness account of this early period. Also they present a complementary companion-piece to Part II of this book: *With the Swamis in America*, originally published in bookform in 1938.

Part I is a brief biographical sketch of Swami Atulananda, acquainting the reader with his character and background.

The purpose of the biography is to provide some frame of reference for the swami's reminiscences and observations which follow in Parts II and III.

With the Swamis in America is a compilation of Gurudas Maharaj's articles, written about Swami Turiyananda in America for the *Prabuddha Bharata*. Swami Pavitrananda, who was then president of Mayavati, edited and compiled those articles into bookform as a surprise for Gurudas Maharaj on his sixty-eighth birthday.

Gurudas Maharaj's letters to Ujjvala express his ideas on various topics such as the four yogas, death, morality, human nature, spiritual experiences, pilgrimage, and practical Vedanta (These, along with other themes running throughout his letters, have been separated for the convenience of the reader). Besides Gurudas Maharaj's spirituality, which gives authenticity and believability to his observations, his rational mind, common sense, and discerning eye make him very real to us—a believable *sadhu* and a trusted reporter of his era.

These letter extracts are a candid view of the heart; Gurudas Maharaj's elder-brother relationship with a fellow Shanti-ashramite (Ujjvala) is apparent as one leafs through the pages of this book. His letters show us the deep bond that the Shanti Ashrama experience made with all who stayed there. In this connection, Gurudas Maharaj, in his article "Moments with the Swami Turiyananda in America" (*Prabuddha Bharata*, Sept. 1927), wrote:

> Swami Turiyananda was not great in the popular sense, he was not a man of world-renown. His influence was local, confined to small circles. But if we apply the same standard to a smaller radius, his influence on individuals instead of on the masses, one would not hesitate one moment to call him a man of rare worth. He himself once said to me, "If I can influence a few students to love the Divine Mother and to live a pure life, I shall consider my work a success."

Gurudas Maharaj's role as a witness to the history of the Ramakrishna Movement during his lifetime is made clear, not

only from the available written evidence of the close relationship he shared with Swami Turiyananda, but from the esteem with which this direct disciple of the Master held his student. In this connection, Swami Prabhavananda frequently recalled:

> When Swami Turiyananda was going to Shanti Ashrama, he told Sister Lalita (Mrs. Carrie Wyckoff): "If I have one man realizing God I will be satisfied." When Sister Lalita asked: "Do you have such a man?" Swami Turiyananda answered: "Yes, one" ("Meaning Gurudasa," Swami Prabhavananda always added).

These letters help us catch a glimpse of the saint and the saint-maker.

It took seven years to transcribe Gurudas Maharaj's faded, handwritten letters into what became 564 typewritten pages of material. It was thus apparent that in order to present these letters for publication, they would have to be abridged. Therefore, repetitious remarks, chit-chat, mundane household matters, and inconsequential names and events irrelevant to the history of the early Ramakrishna Movement in America and India were deleted. What remained were reminiscences of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna or characters particularly prominent in the early history of the Shanti Ashrama and Vedanta work in America and India, as well as many candid observations of American and Indian life—both monastic and householder—and of a Westerner in an Eastern religion. In writing, Gurudas Maharaj would often remind Ujjvala of the practical and spiritual advice given to them by Swami Turiyananda at the Shanti Ashrama. His letters also include literary reviews, which divulge the natural spiritual bent of Gurudas Maharaj's mind, as well as current events that serve as a frame of reference for the spiritual, historical, and practical information which these letters provide.

How could these letters be best abridged and presented without unnecessary detail to bore the reader, while still keeping valuable information conveniently accessible to the researcher? The letter extracts are not chronologically arranged from first to last. However, they are arranged chronologically under chapter titles, subheads, and extract

titles. This system serves as a natural process of deletion, because repetitions or discrepancies in the letters became quite obvious when filed under their suitable headings and were thus subsequently eliminated. Editorial discretion has been used throughout the letters in order to make more available private letters that were not intended for publication and to thus provide historically or spiritually relevant material without misrepresenting the writer.

Along with Gurudas Maharaj's letters to Ujjvala, there was a bundle of other papers that she had saved. Included in it was an original photograph of Swami Trigunatita in a horse-drawn carriage on his way to Shanti Ashrama, used as the partial cover design of this book. Also included in Ujjvala's memorabilia were fifteen unpublished letters of Swami Turiyananda to Ujjvala and Dhira;* unpublished and partially published articles by Gurudas Maharaj and Frank Rhodehamel on Swamiji and the Shanti Ashrama; Ujjvala's unpublished notes on Swami Trigunatita; copies of letters that Gurudas Maharaj had written to other members of the Shanti Ashrama or letters that Ujjvala had written to Gurudas Maharaj (this material—approximately 100 letters—contained much information about Swami Turiyananda, the San Francisco and Los Angeles centers, and Josephine MacLeod); and an unsigned note relating Swami Saradananda's passing. Much of the background information used in the editorial notes at the beginning of the letter extracts or in Gurudas Maharaj's biographical sketch was taken from these sources.

All editorial notes are bracketed and italicized. To facilitate reading, quotation marks have been added at the beginning and end of italicized block quotes.

Also included as Appendices are a letter written by Swami Dhrubeswarananda, describing Swami Turiyananda's passing; a "Chronology" of events around Gurudas Maharaj's life (Many of its dates have been gathered from Ujjvala's unpublished notes at the Shanti Ashrama, from 2 August 1900 until August 1901); both a list of "Sanskrit Names Given at the Shanti Ashrama" and a "List of Members of the San Francisco Center, 1 March 1903"; as well as "Ujjvala's Daily Program,"

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*To be published in full in *The Vedanta Kesari*.

which includes Swami Trigunatita's comments and corrections.

Background information useful to this book was also gathered from other sources. Through the courtesy of Swami Chetanananda and Mrs. Ellis's hard labor, the St. Louis center's research library provided a near complete set of Gurudas Maharaj's articles written for *Prabuddha Bharata* and *The Vedanta Kesari*. We are also grateful to Swami Prabuddhananda and the Vedanta Society of Northern California for the remainder articles as well as rare photos of the direct disciples and Shanti Ashrama. To Swamis Sattwananda, Tattwabodhananda, Pramathananda, and Vidyatmananda and the Sarada Convent, I am indebted for their biographical information on Gurudas Maharaj, Brahmachari Adi Chaitanya, Mrs. Carrie Wyckoff (Sister Lalita), Ujjvala, Herbert, Haridas, and others. And to Pravrajika Anandaprana I am especially grateful for her contribution of valuable material from the unpublished conversations of Swami Prabhavananda, whom she served many years as secretary.

With the Swamis in America, reprinted as Part II in this book, is an edited edition of its 1938 parent-book. Spelling, punctuation, and grammar have been corrected, modernized, and made consistent.

The original letters have been abridged to serve as Part III of this manuscript. Due to the quantity of deleted material and the systematic rearrangement of the letters, elipses seemed extraneous and were subsequently deleted, as they would have only served to distract the flow of the narrative voice. Since Swami Atulananda was Dutch, and English was not his mother tongue, editorial discretion was used in making Part III conform to the style of this book, so as not to distract from the letters' content. In Gurudas Maharaj's letters and Ujjvala's inclusions, spelling, punctuation, and grammar were corrected, modernized, and made consistent. However the original spelling, punctuation, and grammar of letters from the direct disciples, Josephine MacLeod, Sister Christine, or any other letter inserts were largely retained.

In Gurudas Maharaj's letters some stylistic irregularities were made consistent, such as his method of letter-shorthand. Incomplete sentences and abbreviated names and words were

many times written out for the convenience of the reader and to avoid an overabundance of editorial footnotes. In some cases, however, such as Gurudas Maharaj's abbreviations of the names of the direct disciples, some abbreviations were retained and sprinkled throughout the letters to provide the reader with the intimate and informal tone of his original letters.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Swami Swahananda, whose words of encouragement, kind support, and editorial wisdom in the final editing of this book have given me the grace needed to finish this project.

To all my sisters at the Sarada Convent, I am grateful for their loving good wishes, and especially to Pravrajikas Baradaprana, Prabhaprana, and Anandaprana for their constant support, editorial suggestions, and time they so generously shared; to Brahmacharini Bhavani for producing some of the illustrations which this book has made available; to Vidya for her labor of love on the cover design; and to Aparna for contributing her typing and computer knowledge.

To Jnanada Lowenkopf, I wish to extend my deepest thanks for making a positive and constructive difference in the outcome of this book. To Mrs. (Brahmamayi) Schuster, I extend my deepest thanks for her support. I am also indebted to Dr. and Mrs. Pierce for their generous gift of a desktop publishing computer program used for this manuscript. To June Gardner, my special thanks for her time-consuming service of copyholding. And to Amba Denney and Mrs. Patricia Kelly, I am grateful for their long hours of typing and typesetting on this project.

Finally, I would like to offer my respectful gratitude to Swami Ananyananda and the present management of Advaita Ashrama for accepting this book.

Sarada Convent
Santa Barbara, California
July 4, 1988

PART I

SWAMI ATULANANDA

1

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

Swami Atulananda, or Gurudas Maharaj, as he was most commonly known in later life, was born in Amsterdam, Holland, on February 7, 1870, the son of a successful tea merchant. His premonastic name was Cornelius J. Heijblom. Among Gurudas Maharaj's favorite childhood memories was the time he went along with his governess and brothers and sisters to the beach and spent the day building castles in the sand. Young Cornelius' childhood was rarely carefree. As his father was a staunch Lutheran who believed in the literal word of the Bible, Cornelius as well as his brothers and sisters were forced to learn the Bible by heart. Furthermore, the weekly Sunday services at the family church were compulsory for all the Heijbloms, but for Cornelius they were such sheer torture that mainly to escape them forever, he left Holland in 1892. At twenty-two years of age, Cornelius, an agricultural graduate, arrived in America's "Wild West." For several years, Cornelius lived such a strenuous life as a farmhand or coachman that he used to drop with fatigue at the end of each day. It was at this time that Cornelius fell from a horse and seriously injured his spine, an injury which forced him to wear a steel and leather belt brace for the remainder of his life. After this accident, the

twenty-eight-year-old Cornelius moved to New York and took a sedentary job in an insurance company.

Shortly thereafter in about the summer of 1898, Cornelius first heard about Vedanta and Swami Vivekananda. Subsequently one Sunday afternoon, the curious youth attended a lecture at the Mott Memorial Hall by a swami who turned out to be Swami Abhedananda, with whom he lived in close contact for the months that followed. Then on April 1, 1899, he received from Swami Abhedananda the vows of *brahmacharya* as well as the name Gurudasa, which means "servant of the guru."

It was not until the fall of 1899, that Gurudasa met Swamis Vivekananda (upon his second visit to America) and Turiyananda. Swami Vivekananda, who stayed in New York two weeks in November just before leaving for California, left a deep impression on Gurudasa's mind as "a lion amongst men." Swami Turiyananda, whom Swamiji charged with assisting Swami Abhedananda in the New York center, also strongly appealed to the young Gurudasa and was later to become his beloved teacher, friend, philosopher, and guide at the Shanti Ashrama.

Meanwhile, however, Gurudasa was filled with the fire of renunciation. But as there was yet no Vedanta ashrama in America, he received the blessings of his teacher to live at the Lord's Farm, a type of Christian community, twenty-five miles from New York and there to practice *tapasya*. It was around this time that Gurudasa reportedly gave himself one year to read, practice, and master Raja Yoga. By the end of that period, Gurudasa—not yet thirty years old—received an *advaitic* experience, convincing him that "this life is but a dream and that the Atman alone is real," which caused him to cast off once and for all his orthodox Christian training of hellfire and brimstone. Finally, after seven or eight months at the Lord's Farm, a letter came from Swami Turiyananda summoning him to Shanti Ashrama, the first Vedanta retreat in America; whereupon Gurudasa left the Lord's Farm and arrived there about December 9, 1900.

After a period of training under Swami Turiyananda till the swami's departure for India on June 3, 1902, Gurudasa was entrusted with the job of overseeing the Shanti Ashrama

affairs as well as the pilgrims who came there to stay. When Swami Trigunatita became the head of the San Francisco center in 1903, Gurudasa continued to administer these duties at the Ashrama. Every July or November, from 1903 till 1914, Swami Trigunatita took a band of students to the Ashrama and trained them. Frank Rhodehamel attended one of those pilgrimages, and in his article "The Shanti Ashrama Days," we receive a fairly clear impression of what Gurudasa's life was like at that time and how he was regarded among his peers:

> Gurudasa with his keen visage and penetrating, clear, blue eyes moved among us, a figure apart. He did not by any means hold himself aloof, but, on the contrary, entered into the give and take contests [of wits] with the rest. But, clearly, he was a good witness. Serious, at times abstractly so, he was, notwithstanding, open to friendly and familiar approach. Again and again his eyes would fairly dance with suppressed mirth. At times he would give vent to outright laughter, and at times it was as if God were with him in his fun. I availed myself of every opportunity to come into personal touch with him. His personality had an irresistible fascination for me, for to my mind there was no doubt but that God had drawn him closely to Himself.
>
> Life at the Ashrama was routine. The days began at 5:30 in the morning and closed commonly at 10 o'clock at night. Gurudasa was the first one up in the morning, taking upon himself the duty of arousing the camp. He would walk from tent to tent chanting Om, Om, Om, pausing at each tent until he received a response before proceeding to the next. Could a more auspicious opening of the day be imagined than to be aroused from sleep by the sonorous intoning of Om? Many mornings I was awake before he made his rounds and would lie waiting to hear the first far-off sound of his voice as he began his chanting. Gradually his voice drew nearer and nearer until it sounded directly in front of my tent. I would answer immediately by chanting Om, whereupon he would turn away, his deep-toned chanting gradually dying away in the distance.

When the reading was over and we settled ourselves for meditation, all the flies in the room took advantage of my helplessness and disported themselves without mercy on the sensitive portions of my face. It was intolerable. I stole a surreptitious glance at Gurudasa to see how he was making out under the circumstances. He did not seem to be as interesting to the flies as I. I noticed, however, that a few flies were on his face, but apparently he knew nothing about it for there was not the slightest twitching of his face to indicate that anything disturbed him.

In 1906, Gurudasa travelled to India and stayed there till about 1912. He returned to America with broken health from having spent a year wandering in India as well as living the ascetic Hindu life in regards to diet and other customs. Years later, when Gurudas Maharaj was reminiscing about this early period of his *sadhu* life to his attendant, he described his first visit to the Belur Math:

> When I first came to the Math, Tulsi Maharaj was the manager of Belur Math. He had sent a person to receive me at the port, but since the ship did not arrive on time, he had gone back to the Math. When the ship finally arrived and I got down, one person approached me with a letter. I thought he had come to receive me, but no, he was seeking a job. When asked whether he could help me get to Belur Math, he agreed and hired a horse-carriage. But after reaching Howrah bridge, he had to get down and ask others how to reach Belur Math! From there he took me to Belur Bazaar. At that time, there was a field ("Math" in Bengali means field). After taking me there, he said, "That is Belur Math."
>
> "What is this?" I said. "I want to go to the monastery started by Swami Vivekananda where monks are living." But the man persisted, "This is Belur Math." After inquiring with a number of people, I finally reached Belur Math.

Gurudas Maharaj further disclosed to his attendant that while he was in Belur Math, he was "very smart" and used to

go whenever someone called him, though he was a little shy. In Gurudas Maharaj's own words:

One day, Raja Maharaj called me, "Gurudas!" When I went to him, I found Mahapurush Maharaj, Baburam Maharaj, and Abhedanandaji sitting with him. Raja Maharaj then asked me, "Do you know dancing?" Since I could not tell a lie, I kept quiet. But he asked again, "Tell me, do you know dancing?" I replied, "Yes, Maharaj." Thereupon Maharaj requested me to dance. When I asked, "How can I dance alone?" he replied, "Why, take a chair!"

Somehow, Gurudasa danced, and thus his shyness was removed!

Another incident which took place when Gurudasa was at Belur Math was recorded by Swami Tattwabodhananda in his unpublished conversations with Gurudas Maharaj. Because Gurudasa was a foreigner, some of the *sadhus* at the Math used to feel hesitant to eat with him, using the same plates and cups. Somehow Mahapurush Maharaj came to know about it. One day after food, when all the *sadhus* were moving about, Mahapurush Maharaj, who was sitting on the long bench in front of the old Math building, called out to Gurudasa. Gurudas Maharaj then related in his own words:

I went and stood at a distance. He [Mahapurush Maharaj] asked me to come nearer. I went a few steps and stood. Then he asked me to come still closer and made me sit by his side on the bench, putting his hand on my shoulder. No one used to sit on that bench, since it was only meant for the direct disciples. Therefore all the *sadhus* standing about could not help but notice this.

Mahapurush Maharaj was smoking a hubble-bubble. He said, "Do you know I have a frog here? It is my pet frog and is making some noise. Did you know that?" I replied, "No, Maharaj, there is water in it. When you inhale, it will naturally make noise." Saying "Is it so?" he gave the hookah to me to try. But I could not take it, so Mahapurush Maharaj forcefully put it into my mouth! There was

no sound! Then he said, "See, the frog has come to know. That is why it is not making noise now." But when I replied, "No, Maharaj, it will make that sound only when it is inhaled," I was made to inhale. Thereupon, he immediately snatched the pipe from my hand and started to smoke. I insisted on washing it before giving it back to him, but he refused. The *sadhus* who observed this incident immediately realized their mistaken notion about me.

When telling this story, Gurudas Maharaj became very emotional and said, "This is how the direct disciples used to teach."

During his first trip to India, in 1911, Gurudasa received initiation from Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother. In this connection, Gurudas Maharaj said at one time that when Holy Mother initiated him, she told him that he could repeat the *mantra* at all times, but if he really wanted to get results, he should meditate at set times and concentrate on the meaning of the *mantra*. When Gurudas Maharaj was later asked how he had felt at the time of his initiation—since he could neither understand Bengali, nor could Holy Mother speak English—he explained, "When a child sits on its mother's lap, in which language do they converse? Similarly, I felt at that time as though the whole world were dissolved, and I was a small baby sitting on the lap of my mother. I felt inebriated, and I had no doubts."

Gurudasa returned to the Shanti Ashrama till he set sail for India again in 1914, staying in India this time till he became ill again and was forced to return to America in 1918. Again he returned to India in 1922—for the last time. On February 18, 1923, Gurudasa received *sannyasa* at Belur Math from Swami Abhedananda, becoming Swami Atulananda. Finally, at the age of ninety-six, Gurudas Maharaj passed away on August 9, 1966—a remarkable *sadhu* who associated with all the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna (except Swamis Yogananda and Niranjanananda), and whose steadfast spiritual quest led him to be the first Western *sannyasin* who remained in the Ramakrishna Order till the end of his life.

Gurudas Maharaj received blessings from several of the Master's direct disciples. One such blessing Gurudas Maharaj

indirectly disclosed to one of his attendants in the course of conversation. He commented that once he had asked Swami Turiyananda, "What *is* the *Nada-dhvani*?" to which the swami had countered him by asking, "Do *you* hear the *Nada-dhvani*?" Gurudas Maharaj replied, "No." After some time had passed, Swami Turiyananda again asked Gurudas Maharaj, "Do you hear the sound now?" This time Gurudas Maharaj did not reply. In this connection, on another occasion Gurudas Maharaj mentioned that all people could hear the *Nada-dhvani*, but because their minds were not tuned to it they were unable to hear it. When his attendant asked whether *he* [Gurudas Maharaj] could hear it, Gurudas Maharaj remained silent.

These blessings from the direct disciples, along with Gurudas Maharaj's inherent qualities of one-pointed devotion to the ideal, ability to assimilate higher teachings, inner resourcefulness, and an integrated blend of all the four yogas were bound to manifest in his life. He was, as Frank Rhodehamel observed, a dedicated worker and concentrated meditator. Furthermore, Gurudas Maharaj made it a point to incorporate Bhakti Yoga into his everyday life. Perhaps this was largely due to the influence of Swami Turiyananda, whose classic spiritual counsel usually pivoted around the name of the Divine Mother. Rhodehamel wrote:

> Concerning all actions contemplated in the future [Gurudasa] used to say "Mother knows." He never said "I will do so and so," but rather, "Mother willing, I will do so and so." On being questioned as to this way of speaking he replied, "The sense of egotism and egoism separates us from the consciousness of the Mother. Only when we do our duty fully can we say that Mother does it. When Mother's will is done *in us*, then Mother does it."

Though well-rounded in all the four yogas, Gurudas Maharaj was a true *jnani*, as demonstrated by his oneness with all. This was manifest in his sympathy for others as well as in his forbearance and acceptance of others' faults. Once a friend of Gurudas Maharaj, P. J. Gandhy, noted that his attendant of

thirty years lost his temper and spoke rudely to Gurudas Maharaj. Gandhy was, as he wrote:

> . . . on the point of behaving rashly when Gurudas Maharaj intervened, with a look of such pain in his eyes, that I could not but desist. Later on Gurudas Maharaj told me that an angry person is his own worst enemy, because if he is at all sensitive, he suffers an awful reaction to his fit of temper. . . . When that Swami died [later], Gurudas Maharaj was stricken with grief and spoke only of his good qualities and his long and loyal service.

In this connection, another attendant observed that above all Gurudas Maharaj always maintained a subjective attitude. He said at one time, "What I am doing—that should be my concern—not what she or he is doing. Do you know, what matters ends there."

Though Gurudas Maharaj saw the world as a shadow-show and the ultimate reality as the Atman, Gandhy one day asked him outright, why, if to him this world was merely a dream, did he then suffer so much from back pain that there were tears in his eyes. Gandhy wrote:

> [Gurudas Maharaj] thereupon smiled and, with a twinkle in his eyes, told me the story of Diogenes who had also looked upon life as a dream; how he was one day pelted with stones by some boys in Athens and when he fell down bleeding, one of the boys came up to him and asked, "Well, Diogenes, do you still maintain that life is a dream?" and Diogenes answered with a smile, "Yes, certainly—only it is a painful dream!" Gurudas Maharaj also then told me that there are levels of consciousness and that even a man of God could not always remain at the highest level; that, when I saw him suffering acute pain with tears in his eyes, he was at the level when he had identified himself with the body, and that it was only when he was merged in the Atman that he was at a level which was beyond the body and the mind!

Those who attended on Gurudas Maharaj became sensitive to the outer signs of these levels of consciousness in everyday occurrences. One attendant observed that sometimes if he sat or stood without wearing his back brace, Gurudas Maharaj would feel such intense spinal pain that he would cry out, "Ah!" When the attendant would run to him to find out what had happened, Gurudas Maharaj would sit quietly and say nothing. If pressed, Gurudas Maharaj would simply say that because of the spine there was pain. But if the attendant happened to mention the pain a little later, Gurudas Maharaj would not be in a mood to reply. He had learned the secret of detaching his mind from the body.

Especially in his later life, Gurudas Maharaj's saintly characteristics inspired many American and Indian devotees, and he received recognition from his fellow monastics as a *sadhu* of deeper realization. With this reputation, Gurudas Maharaj attracted many devotees, who travelled sometimes great distances just for his *darshan*. Some, however, would come out of curiosity and ask many questions, which Gurudas Maharaj could not always follow. His attendant would have to repeat the questions clearly, and then Gurudas Maharaj would patiently answer. Later, however, he would remark to his attendant that some people did not know what to ask. They would only put questions so that they could tell others. He explained:

> Look, you know the story of the oyster which lives deep in the sea and comes up during the rains under the Swati constellation. It takes a drop of rain water and goes down. Then slowly and patiently it converts it into a pearl. Like that, we must try to acquire something. After hearing, we must think it over, meditate on it, and make a pearl out of it. What is the use of people asking so many questions [for advice] when they do not intend to follow it?

Though in his later years, Gurudas Maharaj's spiritual personality drew devotees from far-off places, he remained a lover of solitude. In the Kankhal Sevashrama, recitation competitions used to be conducted for the school children. Gurudas Maharaj would be requested to come and attend. He

would comply, but would come and sit at a distance. When asked why he preferred to sit so far away, though he was hard of hearing, he replied that he did not like to be in a crowd. He explained that just like air pollution, the ideas, or thought-currents of people, pollute the atmosphere. Since he could feel this, he avoided crowds. Finally he would say: "I can sit in a corner with a book in hand and be happy reading it for some time if it is good. Otherwise, I am happy within myself. I don't like to be in crowds."

No matter how indrawn Gurudas Maharaj's moods were, in daily life he was never aloof from showing kindness to others. He used to remember the smallest service given him. In this connection, Swami Tattwabodhananda remembered that in his later years, Gurudas Maharaj used to use a short walking stick. So he purchased a longer and lighter cane for his comfort. Gurudas Maharaj used it on one or two occasions, but then not for many years. Nevertheless, every time Gurudas Maharaj travelled from Barlowganj to Kankhal and back, he would carry that stick with him. Later, when Satyen Maharaj (Swami Sattwananda) became the head of the Barlowganj Ashrama, he mentioned this to Gurudas Maharaj: "Maharaj, this stick is not necessary if you are not using it." To this Gurudas Maharaj replied, "No, no. Chitta has given it." He carried it till his last day.

Gurudas Maharaj had a rare combination of humility based on inner strength and self-surrender. When devotees would come to receive his blessings, Gurudas Maharaj used to say that it was not his habit to bless and he would, instead, invoke the blessings of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna. Furthermore, his answers were not intellectual; they came right from the heart. While talking about Swami Turiyananda, one of his attendants observed that his face would glow. He would say, "What shall I say? Though I had a very good opportunity to mix with Turiyanandaji, I could not understand him at that time; otherwise I could have learnt much from him."

In his later years, Gurudas Maharaj lived in the memory of his association with Swami Turiyananda and the Shanti Ashrama days. He used to tell his attendants how Swami Turiyananda, though staying in America, would always live in the same manner as he would in India—on the bank of the

Ganges and in the Himalayas. Even while walking on the road, Swami Turiyananda used to repeat "Om." As his speed would increase, so also would the volume of his voice, and people around would be wonderstruck. But while at Shanti Ashrama, Swami Turiyananda would utter "Ma, Ma" and speak only of Mother.

Once Gurudas Maharaj told his attendants that Swami Turiyananda had received an insect bite while at the Shanti Ashrama. The bite started to cause pain and swell. Everybody was worried. About that time, one gentleman appeared—a Dr. Adam. "Are you a medical man?" he was asked. "Yes," came the reply. Then he was told about the condition of the swami. Immediately Dr. Adam attended on Swami Turiyananda and gave him some medicine. Subsequently this doctor remained for about a month or so at the Shanti Ashrama. When in his old age, Dr. Adam became blind and then went to India, he first visited Kankhal where Gurudas Maharaj was staying. Gurudas Maharaj's attendant described their meeting:

> P. J. Gandhy was there. He went and told him that he was Dr. Adam. Gurudas Maharaj said, "I am Gurudas." Both of them embraced each other in such a way that it was a moving sight—those two old persons embracing and shedding tears. They were so happy and started talking about the Shanti Ashrama days. It was a sight to see!

Gurudas Maharaj had the capacity to accept cheerfully all suffering, no matter how great. Once, when one of his attendants became excited, Gurudas Maharaj calmly reminded him, "You're taking the unreal for the real." He told this same attendant:

> Nothing has any value; it is only our reaction that gives something value. If you don't react—and accept blame or criticism—then you won't carry that reaction with you. The object will have no value. It cannot touch you.

This philosophy was lived by Gurudas Maharaj with such conviction and faith, that it could not help but inspire those

around him. When during the last ten years of his life he was afflicted with a painful, cancerous ulcer near one eye that ultimately deprived him of his favorite pleasure, reading, Gandhy asked him pointedly why he did not pray to be released from such a body. Gurudas Maharaj smiled and gently echoed a verse which Swami Turiyananda had used to quote to him:

> God's plan like lilies unfold,
> We must not tear the leaves apart,
> Time alone will reveal the galaxy of gold.

PART II

WITH THE SWAMIS IN AMERICA

2

AN ACCIDENT OR DIVINE PLAN?

If there was such a thing as an accident, I would say that my coming into contact with the Vedanta teaching was purely accidental. It had all the appearance of an accident; it came to me unsought, unexpected—it just happened. Consciously I had nothing to do with it, so far as appearance goes.

In reality I do not believe in accidents, at least not in my saner moments. I believe that our lives are guided, that a helmsman steers our boat across the ocean of life. Firmly seated at the helm of our hearts, he catches the wind of our desires and steers the boat accordingly. Little eddies or whirlpools may threaten to throw us to one side, but his steady hand keeps us in the main current—the deep-seated, flowing desire of our hearts.

Sometimes we mistake these little eddies for the main stream and we rebel when our boat is turned away from them; we are disappointed. But our helmsman, unmoved, steers us onward.

The secret of success lies in one-pointed, all-absorbing, all-sacrificing effort in a given direction. But most of our planning and scheming in life is concerned with the shallow, surface currents of our consciousness. And then there is little progress. Few there are who can discern the deep undercur-

rent that leads to the goal, whatever that goal may be. And amongst those who do discern what their real aim in life is, there are but few who can withstand the temptation of momentary excursions in different directions. We grasp what lies near at hand, what is easy to attain, what brings immediate enjoyment. And thus we suffer delay.

It is only when we realize the presence of an ever-watchful Guide, that we can resign ourselves to His hands; that putting aside our little likes and dislikes, and giving up our little vain struggles in many directions, we are content to be guided by Him. Consciously to cooperate with that all-powerful, all-knowing Witness within is given to very few. But whether we realize it or not, consciously or unconsciously, sooner or later our boat is turned back to the right course.

This, perhaps, is one of the first practical lessons that was taught to me during my contact with the swamis. It was not put to me in just that way. It was given to me in very simple language: "Do not plan, Mother's will shall come to pass."

How difficult it is to follow even simple precepts. Still, its truth I cannot deny if I think back to how I first met the swamis. I had not planned it, but Mother's will did come to pass.

But one moment! Shall we sit idle then, resting on our oars and letting things just happen? By no means! We must pull the oars with all our might and turn on full steam. However, we must not pull against the steersman, but pull straight ahead and let the helmsman steer. How easy it sounds! "Let Mother plan. Think only of Her!"

Vital truths, it seems, are always put in plain language, homely, without ornamentation. For example, take Sri Ramakrishna's teachings. Could anything be simpler? But of these simple precepts, he himself had said: "If you follow one-sixteenth part of what I tell you, it is enough." And again, he said, "Take one idea and work it out to its conclusion." It does not seem such a difficult task. Furthermore, the goal is promised to us, if we succeed. But have we ever tried it? If so, for how long? The sun is hot, the shade so pleasant. We rest for just one moment and stretch ourselves on the soft turf. Sleep overtakes us and our journey is postponed.

It was in New York, many years ago, that one evening I was one of a small audience listening to an address by the late Mr. Colville. Fluent, sincere, optimistic as Mr. Colville always was, it was a pleasure to listen to him. A good deal of wholesome advice—a mixture of New Thought, Theosophy, and Christian Science. It was what is called "an inspired talk." Buoyant, hopeful, encouraging, his talk acted like a tonic on a drooping spirit. He followed faithfully the doctrine of his creed, to see good everywhere and in everything. It was often carried to extremes. I remember, it was a cold, stormy night. Everyone was glad to be under shelter. But when Mr. Colville entered the hall, the first remark he made was: "Is not this a glorious evening!" And he seemed to mean it. He rubbed his hands and looked very happy and comfortable. I could not help smiling. A new sheep in the fold, I looked around to see how this extraordinary statement struck the audience. I saw many smiles, someone in the audience straightened up as if to shake off a different impression, and everyone looked happy. The tonic acted and the effect was remarkable. I felt good to be there. There was no room for pessimism. Pessimism fled by the backdoor as soon as Mr. Colville entered by the front. His religion was a religion of cheerfulness—no mistake about that.

I have many friends among the New Thought people, and I like them as a class. They are so happy, energetic, and positive that they have found the secret of success—the panacea for all the ills poor humankind is heir to. But it must be remembered that there is New Thought and New Thought—Menticulture, Higher Thought, Mental Healing, New Consciousness, Joy Philosophy, etc. All do not go to the same extremes. But sometimes they are amusing in their enthusiasm and naivete. Let me relate one instance, with due respect for the saner class (to which Mr. Colville belonged), who are sincere and always ready to help their less fortunate brethren. The religion of cheerfulness is not to be despised in an often too sordid world. Optimism is contagious and perhaps the best and only remedy for temperaments that are too phlegmatic and pessimistic.

Most schools of New Thought teach in one form or another, to put it very briefly, that everyone should be healthy, pros-

perous, and happy. Those who are otherwise are diseased. The remedy for disease is to deny or ignore it—to hold the positive thought that all is well with everyone. If you have a headache, forget it. Say and try to believe that you are Divine Mind, are in perfect health, and that there is nothing wrong with you. The headache will go in no time. If you cannot do that, go to a practitioner. He will hold the thought for you and you will be cured. This is called "treating" a person. The patient does not have to do anything, but try to forget the disease and remain passive. The practitioner remains silent and concentrates his mind on health. "You are Divine Mind. Divine Mind is free from disease; you are free from disease. You are in perfect health." No questions are asked of the patient. He is told not to mention or think of his trouble and to remain calm and silent. The truth seems to be that some people do get cured, including cases where medical men had given up all hope. Some of the cures seem almost miraculous. So far so good. And when this practice is applied to animals as well as to human beings, we know that animals can be hypnotized, and I see no reason for ridicule. Let our sympathy and help go out to all living creatures. Whether I myself have much faith in the practice or not, is not now the question. It seems that almost any means—even charms—will act as a cure for some people. Neither does it matter now whether we regard a religion of health, wealth, and prosperity as a refined form of materialism—where God is made the means and the world the end. I am not now discussing the merit or demerit of the different schools of New Thought. I am writing down some of my early reminiscences, and I simply want to relate a funny instance that was brought to my notice many years ago.

A gardener at one of the New Thought Homes was in difficulty. It was in California. There had been no rain for weeks and the garden was sorely in need of water. But unfortunately the windmill that supplied water for irrigation refused to work. What could be done? If a convert to New Thought does not go to a physician when there is something wrong with the human machine, why should he go to a mechanic when the windmill is out of order? Divine Mind is all-powerful. What the windmill required was "treatment."

The other members of the Home had all gathered for breakfast when the gardener entered the room and in all earnestness requested that they all go into the silence for a few moments because the windmill had shown symptoms of disorder. "Let us treat the windmill," he said. "Let us repeat silently: Everything is Divine Mind. There is no disorder in Divine Mind. The windmill is in good working order and ready to give us water." The members acquiesced.

The silence over, our friends were perfectly confident that water would come. In great expectation they ran into the garden, and the windmill was turned on. But, I am sorry to say, this time their faith received a rude shock. The windmill made some faint attempts, squeaked, then balked, and stood there. And our simple-minded gardener had to undergo the humiliation of calling in a mechanic to put things aright.

Shortly thereafter, I came to know this gardener, and I had my suspicion that he was not quite as innocent as some people thought him to be. Our friend was fond of practical jokes.

Later, this same gentleman stayed with us at the Shanti Ashrama. We had a mare there that roamed about free and was caught only when needed. However, she did not like to be caught, and as she had one hundred and sixty acres of land to make good her escape, she sometimes gave us considerable exercise before we could corner her.

One day, she had been especially clever in dodging us, and we were all pretty well tired out when we roped her. Our friend had done his share in capturing the mare, and we were leading her to the shed in triumphant procession, when he called out: "Swami, the mare likes to be free, but we have put the rope around her neck and now she is in *maya* (bondage)." The swami was highly amused at this new application of the word *maya*. He laughed heartily and said: "Yes, Mr. P., you are right, we have put the mare in *maya*, but we ourselves want to get out of *maya*. Be careful that you do not meet with the same fate that the mare has met. Cut the rope and be free!"

Another day the swami had been telling us that we should try to bring out the divinity that is in us. Afterwards he met Mr. P. and said: "Mr. P., what have you been doing?" Mr. P. had been cooking his dinner and he promptly replied: "Swami,

acquaintance. "There is a question-class at my home," she said. "The swami would be glad to meet you there. There are only a few of us, and we meet every Wednesday evening. Come and meet the swami." I accepted this very kind invitation and that very week went to the address given me.

There was a small gathering—perhaps not more than twenty persons. The room was cozy, incense was burning, and on a small table were pictures and flowers. The swami was already seated, and the hostess offered me a chair near him. After a few minutes the swami opened the meeting with a prayer in Sanskrit. I think it was the well-known invocation at the beginning and end of some of the Upanishads: *"Saha navavatu saha nau bhunaktu saha viryam karavavahai,"* etc. "May He protect us from all evil! May the teacher and the student enjoy together the blessings of the Lord! May whatever we study be well learned, and may it enlighten us! May dissension be far from us! Om Peace, Peace, Peace. Hari Om!" How beautiful and how impressive sounded the ancient Sanskrit prayer as it was chanted by the swami in his deep, melodious voice. How exquisite the intonation!

This was followed by a few minutes of silence. The swami sat erect—perfectly still—with his hands folded and his eyes closed. We all followed his example and meditated for a while. Then came a few remarks on the law of *karma*, and we were invited to ask questions. The questions were not systematic; all kinds of subjects were touched on.

"Was Jesus a yogi?"

"Yes, otherwise how could he have realized his oneness with the heavenly Father?"

"Why do the *sannyasins* in India wander about?"

"Because they do not want to be a burden to anyone but to learn perfect reliance on God."

"Does one have to be a vegetarian to practice yoga?"

"When practicing Raja Yoga one should not take flesh. With the other yogas it is not absolutely necessary to be a strict vegetarian. But in India all the yogis are vegetarians. Almost all the Hindus are vegetarians."

Then the swami spoke to explain why the Hindus do not like to take flesh. And so the subjects were various. The meeting lasted for an hour or more. After the meeting I was intro-

duced to the swami. He was courteous, asked me a few questions, and said that he hoped I could come again. I told him how very much I appreciated his lectures and how helpful they were to me. He seemed pleased. "Practice a little," he said. "The secret of success lies in meditation. Come here regularly and when you are in doubt or you need any help, come to me." I thanked him and promised to do so. This was the end of our first meeting.

I marvelled how the Lord was steering my boat in new directions, away from the tumult of an external life on waters peaceful and calm, of greater depth, but safe under His protection. I felt that in Swami Abhedananda I had found a teacher who could help me and that my spiritual progress henceforth depended on my own efforts and sincerity under the swami's guidance and instruction.

3

SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Swami Abhedananda did not mix with his students as freely as some of the other swamis have done. It is true that he held social meetings where the students could freely talk and mix with him, and he gave one hour each week to meeting personal inquiries. But by nature he was always more or less reserved, and in private life he was not easily accessible. Swami Abhedananda insisted on a certain amount of privacy. This was probably wise and necessary on his part. He gave himself heart and soul to his work, and he needed hours of solitude to prosecute his studies and to prepare his carefully thought-out lectures, free from outside disturbances. But one could always be assured of his ready assistance, his sympathy, and encouragement when one made it a point to approach him.

I rarely visited the swami in his own rooms, but on many occasions I found it possible to have very close and intimate talks with him, at which time he would give me most valuable advice.

In years there cannot have been much difference between us. The swami may have been my senior by five or six years at the most. But I regarded him as a wise and loving father—a guide who understood my struggles and difficulties—and I felt that he loved me as a son. I was exceedingly happy to have found a

teacher who had realized that for which I was striving. I considered myself greatly blessed to be guided by one of Sri Ramakrishna's direct disciples. And sometimes when shaking hands with the swami, I thought, "Now I am touching the same hand that has performed service to the great Master."

At times, I have doubted whether we can be really helped by others spiritually, whether progress does not depend entirely on our own effort, and whether help does not come solely from within. But as I look back over the many years that I have known the swami, I must confess that a teacher is almost always necessary for us. Without sincerity and effort on our part, it is true that no help will avail. But a teacher can show us the way. He can open our eyes, make us see in the right direction, and, by his advice and encouragement, he can stimulate our efforts. Where there is a happy relationship between master and disciple, progress is greatly facilitated. Not in vain do the Hindu scriptures advise association with the wise; not in vain do these scriptures ask the student to love and revere one's teacher and if possible to render him humble service. "That wisdom the wise beholders of the truth will teach thee by thy reverencing, asking, and serving them" (Gita 4. 34).

We have to dig and we have to dig hard, but it is of great value to have it pointed out to us where and how we must dig. Without guidance the road is difficult to find and hard to travel. "That ancient, narrow path stretching far away is as sharp as the edge of a razor and hard to pass over. Dangerous is that path for mortals to tread." Has anyone found it different? It is therefore that the *rishi* added: "Arise! Awake! Seek out the great ones and receive understanding." Shall we then not be filled with love and devotion towards those who stretch out a helping hand to us? Can our gratitude ever repay what they have done for us?

Gradually I became acquainted with my fellow-students, acquaintances which in some cases have ripened into close friendships. Those were happy days, those early days of sincere and enthusiastic search for wisdom and realization. There was so much to learn, to read, and to discuss. It was a new life, a quickened life, a lifting of the mind into new regions of thought and being. We were on the alert. Every scrap of information,

every new book or picture was to us a source of real happiness and inspiration.

We heard about the Master, Sri Ramakrishna—how he had struggled and wept for his Divine Mother, how day and night he had prayed for Her vision, how he had forgotten food and sleep and even his body in his yearning search for Her; and how at last the battle was won, the body was subdued, and the Mother had revealed Herself in all Her glory. What inspiration we drew from the account of that holy and perfected life! And then came the story of the greatest of his disciples, Swami Vivekananda, whom then we had not met. How swept onward by a spiritual torrent he, then a mere boy, ran one day to Sri Ramakrishna's room at Dakshineswar to put to the sage the startling question: "Sir, have you seen God?" And the Master's reply: "Yes, my boy, I have seen God and I shall lead you on the way that you may also see Him." Is it strange that we hung onto the words of him who brought these revelations to us? Is it strange that we feel eternally grateful to him who thus quickened our spirit? I for one pray that I may never forget and that I may never lose my gratitude for the help received from Swami Abhedananda in those early days.

I had now become a sincere student of Vedanta. Externally my life was uneventful—an even flow of routine life. I followed my occupation which involved little effort and left me much time to pursue my study and practice of Vedanta. I spent much time at the Vedanta headquarters, where I tried to make myself useful to some extent and where I was in close contact with Swami Abhedananda. I did not miss a single lecture or class. And I used to go to the swami for help when I was in doubt or difficulty. How patient and kind the swami always was!

Swami Abhedananda taught us how to meditate and to pray. "From the unreal lead us unto the Real, from darkness lead us unto Light, from death lead us unto Immortality; come to us, thou Destroyer of all ignorance and protect us by thy compassionate face forever and ever. Protect us from all evil thoughts and desires and let us always remember that we are the divine spirit." What a wonderful prayer! Who uttered this prayer first —when and where? To answer this question we would have to look far back through the centuries of Indian history. Was it

first wrung from the heart of a *rishi* rapt in meditation on the bank of the Ganges? The earliest record of this prayer is found, I believe, in the *Brihadaranyaka*, one of the oldest Upanishads. And ever since, for thirty centuries or more, it has been on the lips and in the hearts of the Hindus. And now at last this ancient prayer had come to us in the West.

To be able to cry out from the bottom of one's heart: "Lead us unto the Real, lead us unto Light, make us Immortal, and make us remember that we are the Spirit," and to get even a faint response—what unspeakable bliss! "For the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard; neither have the things which God hath prepared for those that love Him entered into the heart of mortal man."

"When you meditate," said the swami, "remember first the great teachers of the world. They have given us the greatest of all gifts, the highest Truth. Remember the greatest of all teachers, the Teacher of the universe. Aspire to be His faithful servant. Send thoughts of love to all living beings, pray that all may be happy, peaceful, and blissful. Then think of your body. Remember, it is the instrument of the soul. We must keep it strong and healthy and make it a useful instrument. We must master the body so that through it we can express our divine nature. Breathe slowly and rhythmically. Imagine that you breathe out all that is evil, weak, and undesirable and that with every breath you draw in, the divine nature is flowing through you. Then meditate on Him who is the Soul of your soul. Try to feel that you are one with the infinite, blissful Existence," etc.

These were some of the invaluable lessons we received from the swami.

Uneventful and easy-going as my external life was, internally it was a life of great activity, but activity that brought rest and peace, calm and happiness. I used to visit one or two of my Vedanta friends, and we would talk till late hours in the night. And often on holidays I would jump on my bicycle and, with one of Swamiji's books in my pocket, would set out for a secluded spot in the forest or on the seashore, where I would read and meditate. There I would pass the day alone. Sometimes one of the swami's most devoted disciples—one of Swami Vivekananda's *brahmacharins*—would accompany me. I valued his company for he knew much about Swamiji, and he

would tell me all about him. He was very devotional. His little room was like a shrine. The walls were decorated with pictures of the different swamis, and in one corner was a little altar with more pictures, candles, and incense. He chanted very beautifully, and many an hour I would spend there. Together we would talk, read, and meditate there. At other times, three of us would go on excursions together.

A mountain, some twenty or thirty miles from New York, was our favorite haunt. We would go there some Saturday afternoon after business hours, take lunch with us, and spend the whole night on the mountain top. We fixed up a little altar from stones, placed on it the pictures of Sri Ramakrishna and the swamis, lit a fire, burned incense, and meditated. Not another soul was near. The view from the mountain was beautiful over a flat prosperous country—green fields, spotted with villages. The following morning we would watch the sun rise and one of us would chant, "*Tat saviturvarenyam bhargo devasya dhimahi dhiyo yo nah prachodayat.*" "Let us meditate on that adorable and self-effulgent light of Him who has produced this universe. May He enlighten our hearts." And later in the morning faint sounds would reach our ears, as the church bells rang in the distant villages, summoning the devotees to worship. We thoroughly enjoyed these excursions.

And so days passed into weeks and months; it may have been a year. And then the swami asked us a question that came as a surprise to us—a surprise that filled our hearts with joy. He called to himself four of his students and asked us whether we were willing and ready to take the vow of lifelong celibacy, whether we were ready to join that most ancient order of *brahmacharins* to which all the sages of India belonged. And thus, blessing upon blessing the swami bestowed upon us. We all consented as we were eager to enlist ourselves for a holy life.

Yes, those were happy days, those early days of spiritual awakening and enthusiasm—now almost forty years ago.* It is pleasant to look back and call them to mind again. It is sweet to remember those days of childlike trust and innocence and longing for holiness. Where are they gone—those days of

* This book was first published in 1938.

hope mingled with assurance, when in the flush of our youth we felt that the goal could not be far off? It is not always so pleasant to compare the past with the present. Still, it may be profitable even though it hurts—even though sometimes it wrings our hearts. And at such times it is perhaps a consolation to remember that—as Swami Abhedananda once told me—spiritual progress is not in a straight line, it is spiral; and even the downward curve is on the way to progress. While the fruit is growing we can watch its development almost day by day. But when the fruit has attained its full size, the ripening process is hardly perceptible.

Life cannot be continuous sunshine. And so in our spiritual life there comes a lull after the fresh breeze, and we seem to come to a standstill. The energy seems lacking, insufficient to overthrow the obstacles. Swept along, carried, as it were, on the wings of a strong urge from within, all is smooth sailing. But the time comes, perhaps to everyone—at least for some time—that we lose vital interest and find ourselves stranded. We have met with what is called, "the obstacles to yoga." "The dark night of the soul," Christian mystics call it.

But of this we knew little then. We did not trouble ourselves about the past or the future. We lived in the present. Neither did deep philosophical questions disturb our peace of mind—the why and how of things. We had grasped a few fundamental truths; these truths we embraced, these truths we wanted to realize and to live. Subtle arguments were not yet undermining our faith. The mind was not yet thrown into that endless tumult of inward questioning—building up theories today, tearing them down tomorrow, constructing and demolishing in turn—vain struggle of the ego, the battle between heart and intellect. Blessed indeed are they who pass over this stage quickly, till in humility and resignation their ears are opened to the blessed assurance: "My child, you need not know much in order to please Me. Only love Me dearly. Speak to Me as you would talk to your mother, if she had taken you in her arms."

In the days of which I write now we seemed to walk on air, we felt strong and buoyant and able to meet all obstacles. Could there be anything too difficult with such a goal in view? We hoped that the swami would make the vows very strong and

binding. They could not be too strict for us. "But what if we cannot keep the vows inviolate?" one of us remarked. "We must and we shall keep our vows inviolate!" was the impetuous reply. "And anyhow it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all," was the opinion of a third.

Do I see you smile, dear reader? Remember, we were not children. We were young, but fully grown up. We had seen life in different phases and little was hidden from us. Well! I also smile, but it is a smile of satisfaction, for perhaps we were children after all. And Jesus loved children. Perhaps he also looked kindly on us, for in those days we were very simple. "Suffer the little children to come unto me," Jesus said, "and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein . . . And he took them in his arms, and blessed them, laying his hands upon them." At least we knocked, even if the door was not thrown wide open; at least we ran, even if we did not get the first prize. "No effort is lost," says Lord Krishna, and we trust in his words.

So it came to pass that on the first day of April, in the year 1899, we were initiated into *brahmacharya*. It was Easter Sunday, the great Christian festival, the feast of Christ's resurrection. A few friends, *brahmacharins* of Swami Vivekananda, were invited to witness the ceremony. It took place at the home of one of the students, in the room where we were in the habit of meeting for meditation. It was all very simple, but nonetheless impressive.

It was evening. The room had been lighted up and was fragrant with burning incense. The picture of Sri Ramakrishna had been placed on a small altar covered with *gerua* [ochre] cloth and decorated with flowers. We placed our humble offering of fruits and flowers on the same altar. And before this picture we meditated and bowed down before we performed the *homa* and took the vows. The altar fire was burning. The swami read *shlokas* from Hindu scriptures that he had selected for the occasion. Then he chanted Sanskrit verses in adoration of Sri Ramakrishna. These verses were his own composition and are often chanted by the devotees in India. The swami then asked us whether we realized that the step we were about to take was a serious step. He pointed out to us that the order we

were about to join was the most ancient order in existence; that the rules of this order were universal and observed by sages all over the world; that the badge of this order was purity and that to dishonor this badge was a great sin.

He pointed out to us that by joining the order, we were entering into a new life. As *brahmacharins* we had to try, with all our might, to conquer and control our passions—not only lust, but also anger and jealousy, hatred and greed. Furthermore we should try to realize the divinity in everyone, love all beings equally, and follow the ideal of non-killing, non-injuring others, and truthfulness. We had to be chaste in word, thought, and deed and always to remember the sexless Spirit. We were to renounce marriage, avoid temptations, and were not to run after sense-pleasures. We should always keep in mind that we were divine spirit. "And remember," the swami said, "you are consecrating your life for the good of all and for the service of God."

The swami then asked the other *brahmacharins* who were present, whether there was any objection to our entering the order. No! there was no objection. Then, one by one, we were asked to approach the sacred fire and to repeat the vows after the swami with the customary invocation and oblation of clarified butter into the fire.

This part of the ceremony over, the swami touched our foreheads with sacred ashes. We received a piece of *gerua* cloth and then with the sprinkling of holy water, the swami gave us our spiritual names: . Muktikama, Shantikama, Satyakama, and Gurudasa. The meaning of the names was explained: "seeker of freedom," "seeker of peace," "seeker of Truth," and "servant of the Master." The ceremony was over. The old *brahmacharins* greeted us as new members of the order, and the swami gave us some of the fruit offerings to break our fast of the day. And then after some pleasant and genial talk, we parted and went home.

4

"FRESH FROM INDIA"

Such were the early days of the Vedanta movement in New York. Simplicity and earnestness was the predominating note in those days. The Society had rented a house in one of the modest quarters of the city. Here Swami Abhedananda lived, and here he met his students and held his classes. The parlor being rather small, a hall was rented for his Sunday lectures. The audiences gradually increased in number and, one after the other, large halls were necessary.

The Sunday lectures appeared in print and these, together with the different publications on Vedanta, were offered for sale at the hall and at the Vedanta headquarters.

The swami became popular and his work increased. He was a very busy man, lecturing, holding classes, giving private instructions, and writing books on Vedanta. The Society flourished, and the intellectual world was attracted. The swami was invited to speak before university assemblies and to address different clubs and societies. What had begun in a private, unostentatious manner, developed into a public movement. The Society was reorganized and the headquarters removed to a better section of the city. Different classes of students enlisted as members, and the Vedanta Society became a busy center.

The change was natural and inevitable. Nothing remains stationary in life; it grows or decays. But the old students did not like the change so much. They preferred the quiet simplicity of the early days. This also was natural. They had experienced the benefit of small, more intimate gatherings at some student's home where everyone knew each other. There was a close bond between these few students and their teacher. And with larger classes and many strangers dropping in, the atmosphere changed. Perhaps it was not quite reasonable to expect that things would continue exactly on the old footing. Anyhow the swami felt that he was called to reach out beyond his little circle, that his message had to go forth to all quarters, that the success of his work necessitated his meeting with the intellectual and well-to-do people of New York, and that Vedanta was not for the few, but for the many.

It was at this stage of the Vedanta movement that Swami Turiyananda appeared on the scene. He had just come from India via England with Swami Vivekananda, who was then the guest of Mr. Leggett, the president of the Society, at his country home.

"Fresh from India" was in itself a recommendation in the sight of the old students. We do not want a westernized swami. Business and lecturing we have enough in America; we want a simple, meditative man—was their attitude.

Right or wrong, this was the state of affairs. Swami Abhedananda, always strong and positive, followed his own counsel. He wanted to spread Vedanta, so he had to follow his own plan. And he flourished: he became a very fine speaker, enriched the Vedanta literature with a goodly number of his productions, was invited to other cities to lecture, and was loved, admired, and applauded wherever he went.

Swami Turiyananda was deputed by Swamiji to assist Swami Abhedananda in the New York work. This he did in his own quiet way. He took charge of the meditation class, conducted the children's class, and gave talks to the students. And during the absence of Swami Abhedananda, he lectured at the Vedanta headquarters. Many of the old students rallied around him, and he attracted a small following of his own.

"Fresh from India" was a fit term for Swami Turiyananda. The Indian atmosphere still seemed to hover about him, as he

clever. I am afraid you will be disgusted with me. I do not know even the Sanskrit alphabet."

"Oh, never mind," he said. "What shall you do with Sanskrit? It takes a lifetime to master it. You can use your time better. Be Mother's child and think always of Her. But Mr. K., I see, is a very good man. He is past middle age and yet he is not married. Is that not excellent?"

"Yes, Swami. He is one of the old students, he is our best friend, and he knows Swamiji."

"Oh, I am so glad. You will also know Swamiji, in time."

"Swami," I said, "did Mr. K. repeat Sanskrit *shlokas* to you?"

"No, he only told me that he was studying a little Sanskrit."

"Oh, Mr. K.," I said, "do give us some of your *shlokas*. Swami will be so glad to hear them." Mr. K. did not require much urging, as well I knew, and at once he began: *"Vasansi jirnani yatha vihaya,"* etc. "As a man casting off worn-out garments takes new ones, so the dweller in the body, casting off worn-out bodies, entereth into others that are new." [Gita 2. 22.]

"Ah, ah! How nice! Go on Mr. K.—it is excellent," said the swami. Mr. K. beamed all over; he was so pleased that the swami liked the *shlokas*. Then Swami Turiyananda spoke to me and said: "You are also not married, I hear."

"No, Swami, I am a *brahmacharin*. Swami Abhedananda has now taught us to look upon all women as our mother, and I try to do that."

"Yes, yes. The Master taught us that way. That is the safest way. Go on and remember it. Our Master had realized that every woman is the representative of the Divine Mother. He saw the Divine Mother in everyone—good, bad, or indifferent. I am so glad. Shiva! Shiva! I have already met with so many nice people, both in England and here."

"But, Swami, we are so active and materialistic. Does not the hurry and bustle of Western life annoy you?"

"Yes, as a race you are very materialistic, but I have met with exceptions. And activity is not bad. I like your energy—you are all up and doing. I see no idleness anywhere. Only that energy should be controlled. It should go inward also—activity in inactivity—but not laziness, mind you. You are a young race; you must enjoy a little. We in India do not know how to enjoy life. We have forgotten that. You will gradually pay more

attention to the spiritual side of life, whereas we will get a little more material comfort and enjoyment. That will come the more East and West meet together. We both have to learn. But India holds the highest ideals. The West has not yet appreciated that. But it is coming. *Hari Om tat sat*." Then the swami began to chant in a very low voice. "*Om, Om, Om. Hari Om*."

And so we were talking in a free and easy manner, when our lady friend, who was in charge of the rooms, called out: "Swami, do you know what time it is? It is almost midnight. I am going to turn out the lights, otherwise you will keep us here all night and our friends will be late at their offices tomorrow."

"Yes, yes," said the swami, "I forgot all about the time. I am so happy to be with you all."

"Never mind, Swami," I said. "The office does not begin till nine o'clock in the morning. There is plenty of time yet. What do you say, Mr. K.?" Mr. K. smiled and said: "I am not in a hurry." But anyhow we took leave of the swami, and told him that we would come back the following day.

We were so happy! Mr. K. walked home with me part of the way. He was a simple, good-hearted man. And this evening he was like a boy. Well, I was as boylike as he was, and we talked and talked about the new swami. I did not get much sleep that night, nor do I know how Mr. K. fared, but the next evening I found him with the swami again when I reached the Vedanta Home. And so evening after evening we met with Swami Turiyananda, others joining us at times. We became closely and intimately acquainted with him.

The chant which I have mentioned was an outstanding feature with the swami. Everyone remarked about it and seemed impressed by it. It was new to us.

This chant was peculiar with Swami Turiyananda. He would keep it up for hours at a time. When he was talking he would chant in between. After asking a question, he would chant while listening to the reply. Walking, sitting, talking, in public or alone—always that soft, melodious chant went on. Sometimes it was rather amusing in the context of our conventional Western life. In a crowded streetcar, the swami, unconcerned about his surroundings, would sit softly chanting, to the surprise and wonderment of the other passengers. But the swami seemed quite unconscious of that. Often I noticed the

passengers look at each other smiling. Of course there was not the least offense. Only it seemed to amuse them about this brown-faced stranger.

Before and after our meditations that chant would come in full strength. It was not only beautiful, it was also helpful, especially before meditation. It had the effect of quieting the mind and of creating an atmosphere. I may compare it with the effect produced by the burning of incense in a Roman Catholic church.

Sometimes the chant would come loud and strong. Again it would be deep like a strong vibration, and would rise and end in a soft high note—very sweet. The tune also varied. This chant was with the swami as long as he was in America. "*Om, Om, Hari Om*"—it would go on and on.

I did not quite understand it at the time, but now I realize how by this chant the swami kept up an inward flow of unbroken meditation and how often it had the effect of making us pause and collect our scattered minds, drawing us inward also. But it was entirely natural with him. It came of itself, without the least effort.

Sometimes, especially later in the Shanti Ashrama when we would be indulging in light talk, we would suddenly hear the chant from the distance, coming louder and louder as the swami approached us. And invariably it would put an end to our light talk and make us remember why we were at the Ashrama. The object of our being there was never kept far from us anyway. But of this later. It was one of the means.

Another peculiarity with the swami was, that while talking with a person, softly chanting in between, he would sometimes look remote as if he were only half listening, as if his mind were elsewhere. This was often puzzling and misleading, especially when the swami was slow in answering a question. It was sometimes thought that he was not interested in the subject or did not like to be drawn outward. But this was not the case. I noticed that he never lost the drift of the conversation and that his answers were always to the point. Once I questioned the swami about it, and he replied: "There are two ways of answering a question: one way is to answer from the intellect, the other way is to answer from within. I always try to answer from within."

Considering the nature of those answers, how a few words could give so much satisfaction to the questioner, it seems that this way of answering from within was most effective. It is answering by insight and is possible only for highly trained and concentrated minds. The answers were like flashes of illumination. The swami would always keep his eyes towards the questioner, and it seems to me that during this process of answering he got a glimpse of the mental state of the questioner. I know that this was sometimes the case with Swami Abhedananda, even when answering questions from the platform. His answer would then be more to the individual than to the audience. And so it sometimes happened that the answer was far more satisfactory to the questioner than to the audience as a whole. I remember that once one of us asked Swami Abhedananda after his lecture, why he had answered a certain question (which I cannot recollect now, but it was about Jesus) in the way he had done, and the swami replied: "Because it was the answer the questioner needed—to another person I might have given quite a different answer."

It also happened with Swami Turiyananda, as we have heard it was so often the case with his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, that he would suddenly begin to discuss a subject which was troubling and weighing on the mind of someone present. There was nothing to lead up to the subject and the person in question would be surprised how the swami happened to solve his doubt and difficulty without asking. These, I suppose, are the higher qualifications of a real teacher—gifts or powers that are developed through a long period of strict *brahmacharya*, self-discipline, and mental control.

5

A LIVING EXAMPLE

One thing was clear. Swami Turiyananda did not care much for public work, organization, and all that. He was for the few, not for big crowds. His work was with the individual —character-building. He seemed to be of the opinion that with organization the spiritual work is apt to suffer. "Lectures," he used to say, "are to reach the public. But the real work can be done only through close personal contact. Both are necessary. And everyone has his own way of working. We must each follow our own way. Swami Abhedananda will reach many people through his lectures. But that is not my way. And I have special instructions from Swamiji. He does not want me to lecture much. Swamiji asked me before he sent me here: 'Can you lecture like I have done?' I said: 'Of course not, Swamiji. What are you saying?' 'Well then,' he said, 'do not trouble yourself about lecturing. You just live the life. Be an example to them. Let them see how *sannyasins* live!' So, you see, I am only obeying Swamiji."

Still, the swami could not avoid lecturing altogether, for he was in full charge of the New York work when Swami Abhedananda was absent. His lectures were usually short. As they were given at the Vedanta Home before small audiences, he could follow his own method. First he would ask the audi-

ence to meditate for a few minutes and then he would begin his talk—interesting, instructive talks, always pointing out the practical side of religion and illustrating his points with stories from the Puranas and other scriptures. These talks were very helpful and they were much appreciated. The questions and answers following these talks were also most interesting.

But as said before, the real life-building work was done with the individual. As a sculptor takes and fashions the clay into shape, so Swami Turiyananda took his students and worked and chiselled away at them. With a steady hand and aim, he fashioned the character of his students. It was done through close, personal contact. And he threw his whole heart into his work. He did it with a purpose and intensity. But it was all done in such a natural way that one never had the idea of being taught. He simply lived with us, and that perennial spring of spirituality that was somewhere hidden within him followed its free and natural course. It was inexhaustible. When sitting together, walking, or taking our food, the stream flowed on without interruption. I could not understand how the swami could always find some topic of spiritual conversation, so I once asked him: "Swami, how is it possible always to speak of holy subjects? Are you never getting exhausted?" He replied: "You see, I have lived this life from my youth; it has become part and parcel of me. And Mother keeps the supply filled up. Her store can never be exhausted. What goes out, She at once fills up again." I could only marvel and be silent.

I have never been a good conversationalist myself, but I have always been a good listener. So when the swami and I went out for long walks together, he would do almost all the talking. And I was so happy just to listen to him. I would feel so inspired! He talked with fire and enthusiasm, and he would lose himself entirely in his subject, forgetting everything else for the time being. Swami Turiyananda impressed everyone who heard him, and all classes of people felt attracted towards him.

How precious the swami's company was to me! How I enjoyed those long walks with him, nay, every moment that I was in his presence!

Let me give just one rather amusing example of the nature of those talks and how the swami threw himself heart and soul into his conversation, oblivious of time or surroundings.

Once Swami Turiyananda and I were walking together in one of the most fashionable avenues of New York. The more interested he became in his subject, the faster he began to walk and the louder his voice became. This in itself was enough to attract the attention of passers-by. But you can imagine the surprise of the fashionable New York people when suddenly the swami halted in the street and with one arm raised in the air, said to me, almost shouting: "Be a lion! Be a lion! Break the cage and be free! Take one big jump and the work is done."

How many stories the swami told us to illustrate what he was saying: "There is a species of snake that lays its eggs and then coils around them. As soon as an egg hatches, the mother snake swallows the little one. But some of these newly hatched babies are so quick and clever that they at once jump outside the mother's coil in order to escape their dire fate. And so," the swami said, "it is with those that are born free. From their birth they are free and Mother Maya can get no hold on them."

As I was then about to take a serious step which was likely to affect the career of my entire life, the swami cautioned me so that I might not act on the impulse of the moment, but first consider well what I was going to do. "There was a hunter," he said, "who had been walking all day in the forest but had not been able to get any quarry. Dejected and tired he rested under a tree. His hunting companion, a hawk, was sitting close beside him. The hunter was very thirsty but no water could be found. Then he noticed that water was slowly dripping down from the tree. Delighted, he put down his cup to catch the precious water. Drip, drip—it fell down into the cup, drop by drop. At last the cup was filled and greedily the hunter stretched out his hand to take it. But just before his hand reached the cup, the hawk with a swift movement upset it. The water was lost. The hunter, terribly annoyed, scolded the hawk and replaced the cup. Again the cup slowly filled up; and when it was full, the hunter, happy to get a drink of fresh water at last, once more stretched out his hand to take it. But the hawk upset the cup as before. The hunter was now beside himself with rage, and he killed his hawk with one terrible blow. He placed the cup again, certain of getting water this time. And while he was waiting for the cup to fill, he looked up to see where the water was coming from. And what did he see? A large snake was hanging down

from a branch high up in the tree. Its mouth was wide open, and from its mouth drop by drop poison was falling into the cup. This was what he had taken to be water. The hawk had twice saved his life, but then he had killed her. With unspeakable regret the hunter buried his old friend who had served him many years and at last had saved his life. So you see," the swami said, "do not throw away what may be your best friend. Consider carefully."

Need I say that such stories made me pause and think?

And then there were many little incidents that impressed me. One evening I came to the Vedanta Home and said: "Swami, there is a very fine concert tonight. It is an oratorio and you will like it. You have never heard our Western music. Let us go!"

"But why would you care for those things?" the swami said. "You have had enough of that now. Let us stay here and read something nice and have a good talk. These amusements we must give up now, if we want Mother."

"Of course, Swami," I said, "I shall be very glad to stay here with you. I thought that perhaps you would like it." Instead we spent a delightful evening together. But I thought: How genuine is the swami's renunciation! Here he is in a new country, and even then he does not care for sight-seeing and all those things. He has no curiosity for new things. He is perfectly happy and contented within himself by talking of Mother. Where shall we find another man like him?

Swami Turiyananda impressed people in his own simple way. We used to go to a little vegetarian restaurant together. It was a quiet place and very few people went there, so we could take our meal and talk freely together. A young woman was in charge of the dining room and she served the few guests that frequented the place. She was a happy, simple country girl, always ready with a smile and a kind remark. Swami Turiyananda liked her. She was so open and free, but perfectly modest. Once the swami asked her: "What is your name?" "My name is Mary," she replied. "Oh, how beautiful," said the swami. "Mary was the mother of Jesus." The girl was so pleased. "Well, now, Swamiji," she said, "I never had thought of it in that way. It does seem like a connecting link, does it not? How nice of you to remind me." "Oh, yes," Swami Turiyananda said, "I shall now always think of you as the mother of Lord

Jesus. Be sure of that! I love Jesus. He also was a *sannyasin*, and he gave his life for others." The girl became devoted to him and she was so happy when she would see the swami come. Somehow or other, Swami Turiyananda always left a lasting impression.

It was not often that the swami spoke about his own life and experiences. It was mostly about his Master and Swamiji. His love, devotion, and admiration for Swamiji knew no bounds. But now and then a story about himself would leak out when I was with him alone.

One day he was impressing on my mind the necessity of practicing what I was learning. "Be always sincere," he said, "and be yourself. Be true! Have no ax to grind. Go always straight for the goal and be strong. When I was a young man, I was reading and practicing Vedanta. I tried always to remember that I was the Atman and not this body. I was in the habit of taking my bath in the early morning. One day I went to take my bath as usual, and I was just about to enter the river when, to my horror, I saw a crocodile not far away. I drew back. But then it flashed on my mind: 'What are you doing? You are repeating day and night, *Soham*—I am He—and now, all of a sudden, you forget your ideal and you think that you are this body! Shame on you!' I thought, 'Shiva, Shiva—that is true.' And at once I entered the river. The crocodile was there but did not move. I bathed as usual, but I noticed that I was hurrying to get through with my bath quickly. Then I said to myself: 'No, I shall not hurry, I shall take my bath as usual.' And so I did. The crocodile disappeared without paying the least attention to me."

All this may lose a great deal by writing it down. The point is that Swami's words acted like medicine administered in the right dose at the right time. It was so appropriate and came just when needed. This made it helpful. And it was all so spontaneous.

Once I felt a little dejected and the swami, noticing it, said: "When we were living at the old Math, now many years ago, it happened once that I was very sad. I could not make any progress for some time, and everything looked dark to me. I was walking up and down on the flat roof of the Math. It was evening and the moon was hidden by clouds. Sleep was impos-

sible for me, I was so unhappy. Then suddenly from behind the clouds the moon emerged and everything looked bright and beautiful. As soon as I saw that, I thought: 'See, the moon was there all the time but I could not see her. So the Atman is also ever present, shining in its own glory, but I could not see it. The cloud of ignorance stood between the Atman and my intellect, overshadowing my mind.' And at once I felt strong again, my doubts all gone."

On another occasion the swami told me how, many years ago when he was travelling on foot as a *sannyasin* in India, the thought was tormenting him that he was living a useless, vagabond life. "Everyone is doing something in this world, but what am I doing?" he thought. "It became very painful," the swami said, "and I could not shake off this thought. I thought of myself as a little, insignificant, useless creature. I was utterly dejected and threw myself down under a tree. There I fell asleep and I had a dream. I saw myself lying on the ground, and then to my surprise I saw that my body began to expand in all directions. It went on expanding and expanding, there was no end to it. At last it seemed to cover the whole world. Then it occurred to me: 'See how great you are—you are covering the whole world. Why do you think your life is useless? A grain of Truth will cover a whole world of delusion. Get up, be strong, and realize the Truth. That is the greatest life.' I awoke, jumped up, and all my doubts had vanished."

The swami was always encouraging us. "Keep at it, keep at it," he would say. "Clench your fists and say: 'I will conquer! Now or never!'—make that your motto. 'Even in this life I must see God.' That is the only way. Never postpone. What you know to be right, do that and do it at once. Do not let any chance go by. The way to failure is paved with good intentions. That will not do. Remember, this life is for the strong, the persevering; the weak go to the wall. And always be on your guard. Never give in. Do you know what Jesus said? 'He who endureth until the last shall inherit the kingdom of God.' Never think that you are safe; temptations come as long as we live." And then the swami told the following story.

In India there was an old *sannyasin* who lived in the forest near a village. He never went far away from his little hut and very few persons came his way. The villagers would come now

and then to be instructed by him. And as they came they would bring a little grain as an offering to the holy man. On this the *sannyasin* subsisted. One day, when he was seated in his hut, he heard the sound of tinkling anklets, as are used by women in India. Before he realized what he was doing, he was up and about to leave his cabin to have a look at the woman. He had not seen a woman's face for thirty years. Then he suddenly halted. "What am I doing?" he thought. "For thirty years I have avoided women, and now in my old age I am tempted and run out like a dog to look at a woman's face? Oh, wretched legs that took me so far, I shall punish you. Never shall you carry this body again." He sat down on the spot. And the story goes, that he never moved from there, dying a few years later without having moved an inch from that place. Such dangers there are, concluded the swami, but also such perseverance and will power.

The swami often spoke of Jesus. Once in the Shanti Ashrama at the breakfast table, one of us spilled a little salt and we joked about it, as in America we say that spilling salt brings a quarrel. The quarrel is avoided by taking a little of the salt that is spilt and by throwing it over the left shoulder. So the culprit did this and we all joined in the fun. The swami himself was fond of fun. But after we had quieted down he seemed to become thoughtful. Then he said in a low voice, as if speaking to himself: "Ye are the salt of the earth." Then he mused a moment and said again as if speaking to himself: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Again a short pause. Then—"I that speak unto thee am he." The swami drew a deep breath. Then in a loud and intense voice he addressed us: "Can you feel the conviction, the realization behind these sayings—the authority? Yes, truly, Jesus was the Son of God. What an inspiration these lives are! We should think about these great souls. No wonder his teachings survived through all these centuries. And then our Master came," the swami continued in a soft voice. "He came to give new life and interpretation to the old teachings. He was the embodiment of all that came before him and then he added something. He taught that all religions when sincerely followed lead to one and the same goal. And he had realized everything that he

taught. That was a wonderful life. It will take the world a long time to understand and appreciate him. He never took any credit to himself. It was always: 'I know nothing—my Divine Mother knows everything.' He was all humility and at the same time he was all strength. We have travelled almost over the whole of India, but never have we seen another like him."

Once in New York, I could not see the swami for several days. I had been busy in many ways, till at last one afternoon I had leisure and went to visit him at the Vedanta headquarters.

"Where have you been so long?" he greeted me. "Come, what's the good sitting in the house? Let us go for a walk. I have had no one to walk with all these days."

"That suits me, Swami," I responded. "Put on your heavy coat and boots. It is cold."

It was winter, and the streets were covered with fresh snow. When we came to a wooded place, the swami was as happy as a child. "What a wonderful sight," he exclaimed, pointing to the trees, each branch covered with a layer of pure, white snow, glittering in the sunlight. "I love your winters. The air is so exhilarating."

When we came to a large pond, we found boys and girls skating on the ice. Their cheeks were flushed with exercise, and they were calling and shouting and pursuing each other in great fun.

"That's why you people are so healthy and strong," the swami called out. "Look at the girls skating with the boys. What freedom! Wish it were so in my country. So innocent and pure! It is a sight for the gods to behold. Come, let us go on the ice. Can you skate?"

"Yes," I said, "I love skating. Everyone in Holland skates."

The ice was slippery and Swami Turiyananda had difficulty in keeping his balance. But he enjoyed it immensely.

On our way home he talked about India, her poverty, and the restricted life of her women. "When shall we also be wealthy and free?" he sighed. Then he became cheerful again, and he told me about the customs in India, the different people he had met during his life of wandering, their ways of living, speech and dress, about the pilgrimages and temples, and the *sadhus* meditating on the banks of the Ganges.

It was most interesting to me. It all sounded like a story of another world. At last, I remarked, "India is a holy land, indeed. The people there must be better than our people in the West."

At this the swami smiled, and said, "Human nature is the same everywhere. But with us everything, except the zenana, is open and exposed. We cannot even keep our natures secret. But you know very nicely how to do that. You all wear masks. When you have pain, you smile; when you are poor, you buy a few cheap tinsels to appear rich; when you are in misery, you say, 'Everything is fine'; when you are not feeling well, you say, 'Never felt better.' We don't do that." Then he laughed heartily. "You know what is the reason?"

"It is because we don't want sympathy," I said loftily.

"That's pride," the swami flashed at me. "You like to give sympathy, but not to receive it. You like to be helpful to others, but you don't allow others to be helpful to you. Life should be a matter of give and take. Be ready to give and equally ready to receive, but without attachment in either case. Then there will be no pride, no self-sufficiency. We cannot stand alone in this world. We are all interdependent."

"Of course," I interposed, "I was speaking of sympathy that is futile. Real, helpful sympathy we all crave. But there has been in the past too much of sentimental, meaningless sympathy that does no good, but degenerates."

"Yes, yes," the swami admitted eagerly in a changed mood. "The new psychology of the West has brought a reaction. You are now beginning to understand the power of thought which our *rishis* taught ages ago. Thinking about our misfortunes only increases the gloom. Your attitude is to scorn failure and push onward to success. That is laudable. I like your cheerful, hopeful outlook on life. You use failure as a steppingstone to success. Down today, up tomorrow."

Then placing his hand on my shoulder, he said, "That is manliness, that is strength. We need that in our country."

After a short silence Swami Turiyananda resumed, "But what I had in mind is this, we live outdoors. These things which you hide so carefully between four walls and a roof, we could not hide if we wanted to. The majority of our people are poor and live in huts. So they are out in the open most of the time. You

cannot hide much when many of you live together in a poor hut. And our better homes, on account of the hot climate, are open too. There is no waiting outside the house till someone answers the bell, unlocks the door, and admits you. We bathe, cook and eat our meals, sleep, pray and work, all in the open. Even our shops are open. And we go almost naked.

"You, on the other hand, live in a cold climate and in a wealthy country. So first you hide your body with clothing. Your clothed body you hide between four walls. Within these four walls each one has his private room where no one ventures without knocking and getting permission to enter. Finally your house is hidden in a garden, and the garden hidden by a wall.

"Privacy is your ideal. We have no privacy. All this reflects in your nature. That is the last thing to hide, and you do it." Then we both laughed and talked about other things.

But before we reached home the swami warned me, "Don't think that all Hindus are saints. Neither are we quite as bad as some of your missionaries tell you. It is simply a matter of nature adjusting itself to conditions. Some of our manners seem barbarous to you, and some of your manners are obnoxious to us. We are always hasty in our judgment of other nations. If we would patiently try to understand the reason for certain customs, we would be more charitable in our judgments. Well, well, perhaps some day you will come to India. Then you will see everything."

I have seen Swami Turiyananda in many moods—sometimes playful, sometimes serene, at other times indulgent, and on rare occasions severe. His spiritual moods would also change. I have seen him in New York startle a sophisticated Christian audience with the bold, uncompromising message of the *advaita* Vedanta, enjoining it to break loose from the bondage of *maya*. "Brahman alone is real," he exclaimed with great force. "Everything else is unreal, and the human soul is that Brahman. The lion shut up in a bulrush cage thinks he is caught and escape impossible. He does not know that one blow from his mighty paw could demolish the cage and set him free. We are bound by the delusion of ignorance. Tear away the delusion and be free. All power is within you, for you are the Atman. With the sword of knowledge, sever the veil of *maya* and assert your divine nature."

To some of the most orthodox in the audience these stirring words sounded like blasphemy. A timid young lady approached Swami Turiyananda after the lecture and told him that she could not understand how the soul could be God and the world unreal. The swami listened patiently to all she had to say. Then in a very earnest tone he consoled and encouraged her. "It took me many years to realize this," he said. "But once it is realized the work is done." Then the lady began to speak in praise of Christianity as being so much easier to grasp. "Yes," the swami admitted, "Vedanta is not an easy, comfortable religion. Truth is never cheap. So long as we are satisfied with glass beads, we won't search for diamonds. It is hard work to delve into the earth, remove the stones and rocks, and go to great depths to find the precious stone. Vedanta is the jewel among religions."

At other times he would take up the dualistic aspect of Vedanta, and speak with great devotion and depth of feeling on the infinite love of the Divine Mother of the Universe. "Surrender yourself to Her," he would say, "and She will guide you on the right path, for She is always ready to help Her children."

He never hesitated to correct our shortcomings in a bold, straightforward way, for which we in the West were hardly prepared.

Some of the students took exception to the unceremonious method in which the swami rebuked them. They were greatly annoyed and offended when he laid bare their weak spots in the presence of others, or even in private. Then he would say, "Yes, people in the West always try to cover up and hide their mistakes. But how can the wound be treated unless the bandages are removed? You hide your real character behind a smooth and polite exterior, but the sore festers in the heart. The guru is the physician, and once the disease is diagnosed he must not fear to apply the lancet, if necessary. Sometimes a deep, clear incision is the only remedy. You are so sensitive, always afraid of being scolded or exposed. When I flatter a little, you say, 'Swami is so wonderful,' but when I utter a harsh word you run away."

Another difficulty Swami Turiyananda had to meet was that some students thought that he did not understand them.

To this he would reply, "I know you better than you know yourself because I can look deep into your mind. What is hidden to yourself is revealed to me. In time you will realize that what I tell you is true."

We could not understand it then. But later when hidden tendencies came to the front, we discovered that the swami was right.

A young student once confessed this to him, and then the swami gave the explanation.

"You see," he said, "ordinarily we know only the surface waves of our mind. But through yoga practice we learn to go deeper. By watching and studying our own minds, we dive below the surface consciousness and observe what is going on there. Many *samskaras*—latent desires and tendencies—are stored up there, waiting for an opportunity to express themselves. These we can discover before they rise to the surface. This is very important, for once a thought has come to the surface it is extremely difficult to control. But at an early stage, before it has fully developed and gathered strength, it is easy to manipulate. This is called 'seeing our thoughts in seed-form.'

"The seed is easily destroyed, but when it has germinated and grown into a big, strong tree, it requires great strength and effort to hew it down. So we must crush our desires in their early, undeveloped stages. Yogis can do this. They keep down undesirable thoughts in the germ state by smothering them beneath thoughts of an opposite nature. Thus they conquer all evil tendencies—hatred with love, anger with kindness, and so on."

Once in New York, after a morning lecture, Swami Turiyananda called me aside and asked me to go with him for a walk. It was a lovely, sunny day. We took lunch together in a restaurant and then walked to Central Park. There we sat down in a solitary place on the grass beneath a tree. The swami had spoken little. As he was in a serious mood and seemed a little sad, I knew there was something on his mind that he wanted to unburden, but I did not feel inclined to approach the subject. However, at last he began.

"You see," he said, "I tell you everything because I cannot keep my thoughts hidden. Some of the students think that I don't understand them. That is because they don't understand

themselves. They don't know the hidden motives that prompt them to action. They feel the impulse to do certain things, and that impulse they interpret to suit their own convenience. They don't see the real desire that pushes them on. I can see these hidden things, but when I tell the students this, they get annoyed and say, 'Swami doesn't understand.' Everybody in this country thinks that he is unselfish, whereas unselfishness is extremely rare. We are deluded by our ego. Therefore, Hindu scriptures say that a guru is necessary. He can probe the mind of the disciple, see his real motives, and warn him in time. But Western people don't understand this. They won't admit the need of a guru. The West is very egoistic."

When we got up and walked home, the swami said, "My Master was a perfect yogi—nothing remained hidden from him. He knew our minds through and through. We didn't have to ask him anything—he anticipated all our thoughts. We never had the impression that he was teaching us, but he watched us all the time. Nothing escaped him. He knew what pitfalls stood in our way, and he made us avoid them.

"Have you seen people play chess? The players sometimes overlook a move because their minds are set on winning the game. But the onlooker will see the move, because his mind is calm, not disturbed by the desire to win. We become ambitious, and thus lose clearness of vision. Ambition sweeps us along, and all prudence is thrown to the winds. Our desires make us blind."

6

A LION AMONGST MEN

Swami Turiyananda did not stay permanently in New York. Swami Saradananda, who then returned to India, had been very successful in his labor in Montclair, a beautiful country town, about an hour's journey from New York. He had made many friends there and devoted students. And as now these students were without a teacher, they requested Swami Turiyananda to take up the work so ably started by his brother *sannyasin*.

The swami consented with the proviso that he be allowed to keep up the work in New York also, for Swami Abhedananda was then absent on a lecturing tour. This was agreed upon. Swami went to Montclair, visiting the New York center every Saturday and staying over Sunday to hold classes and give lectures. Thus every Saturday and Sunday we had him with us.

Very soon the swami made himself beloved in Montclair as he had done in New York. He was the guest at the home of one of Swami Saradananda's most devoted students [Mrs. Wheeler]. It was a home of culture, piety, and cheerfulness—one of those healthy, balanced American homes rich in mutual love and consideration, with a great deal of freedom, but perfectly regulated; the children full of life and enterprise, adoring the parents and very free with them; a

home of mutual understanding. Swami Turiyananda enjoyed being there, and every member of the family loved and respected him. The swami saw American family life at its best, and it was a revelation to him. The husband was a Christian Scientist but sympathetic towards Vedanta. The wife was a staunch Vedantist of the devotional type. The swami often spoke of her as one of the most spiritual women he had ever met. "She is so *sattvic*," he used to say, "firm and quiet. She always does the right thing at the right time without the least fuss."

Once, while staying there, Swami Turiyananda received a letter from India. It contained the sad news that part of Bengal was under the grip of a devastating famine. His hostess saw that the letter saddened the swami. She inquired whether he had received bad news. Reluctantly the swami told her that the people of Bengal were visited by famine. Not another word was said. But a few days later his hostess presented the swami with a purse of money to send to India for the famine-stricken people. Quietly, without the swami knowing anything about it, she had gone to her friends and collected the money.

An interesting incident took place when Swami Saradananda was living at this happy home. The swami had often spoken about Sri Ramakrishna, and one day he produced his Master's photograph and showed it to the lady of the house. "Oh, Swami," she exclaimed, "it is the same face!" "What do you mean?" asked Swami Saradananda. And then she told him that long ago in her youth, before she was married, she had had a vision of a Hindu whose face was the same that she now saw in the photograph. "It was Sri Ramakrishna," she said, "but I did not know it until now. I was so impressed and charmed by the vision at the time, that I remembered the face very distinctly. I have been going about here and there ever since I have had the vision—whenever I heard that a Hindu had come to America—but I was always disappointed not to find the same face. At last I see that it was Ramakrishna."

At this time a new event took place. Swami Vivekananda came to New York. But, alas! it was only for a short visit. He stayed with us for less than two weeks. Under the kind ministration of friends at a country home, Swamiji had partly recu-

perated his health. But he was still far from being well, and it had been arranged to send him to California—three thousand miles from New York—the land of sunshine, warmth, and fragrant air.

On his way to California, Swamiji halted at Chicago for one week. There he was with his devoted and admiring friends who had witnessed his triumph at the religious congress some years previously. Then Swamiji proceeded to California where he soon found himself strong enough to appear on the lecture platform from where he attracted large audiences.

During the short period that Swamiji stayed in New York, there was great rejoicing at the Vedanta Home. Swamiji did not give any public lectures but he attended the classes and meetings at the Vedanta Home, and there he gave short talks and answered questions. A public reception was given to him at the Home, and his former friends and students gathered in large numbers to meet their beloved teacher again. It was a very happy gathering. Others were also present who had long desired to meet the great swami of whom they had heard so much.

Though public, the reception was informal. The swami had a smile, a joke, or a kind word for every one of his old friends. Part of the time he was seated on the floor in the Indian fashion, some of the friends following his example. There was much talking and laughing, and the swami would show by a gesture or a remark that he had in no way forgotten his old students.

About Swamiji, much has been written, and I do not wish to go into repetition. Let me record only one of my impressions of the evening. I do so because it came to me with such great force.

Swamiji was so simple in his behavior—so like one of the crowd—that he did not impress me too much when I first saw him. There was nothing about his ways that would mark him as the lion of New York society, as so often he had been. Simple in dress and behavior, he was just like one of us. He did not put himself aside on a pedestal as is so often the case with lionized personages. He walked about the room, sat on the floor, laughed, joked, chatted—nothing formal. Of course, I had noticed his magnificent, brilliant eyes, his

beautiful features and majestic bearing, for these were parts of him that no circumstances could hide. But when I saw him for a few minutes standing on a platform surrounded by others, it flashed into my mind: "What a giant, what strength, what manliness, what a personality! Everyone near him looks so insignificant in comparison." It came to me almost as a shock and seemed to startle me. What was it that gave Swamiji this distinction? Was it his height? No, there were gentlemen there taller than he was. Was it his build? No, there were near him some very fine specimens of American manhood. It seemed to be more in the expression of the face than anything else. Was it his purity? What was it? I could not analyze it. I remembered what had been said of Lord Buddha —"a lion amongst men." I felt that Swamiji had unlimited power, that he could move heaven and earth if he willed it. This was my strongest and lasting impression of him.

When the swami returned from California, I was no longer in New York so I never saw him again. But I am grateful that I have seen him and that during those two weeks he had sometimes been very kind to me. And even now as I read and reread the swami's lectures, that picture of wonderful strength and purity comes before my mental vision. And in those printed lines there still seems to vibrate something of that great spirit that came to enlighten the Western world. "These great and peaceful teachers," says the sage Shankaracharya, "come to regenerate the world like the spring that brings forth new fruits and flowers. And after they themselves have crossed over the ocean of world-bondage, they help those who strive for liberation to reach the haven of peace and blessedness. And this they do from a purely unselfish motive."

7

THE NEED FOR A VEDANTA RETREAT

In the preceding pages I have now and then alluded to the Shanti Ashrama. It may interest the reader to know how this Ashrama came into existence and something about the life and work there.

Before Swami Vivekananda returned from California, a young Vedanta student in New York, no longer satisfied to live a life of comparative ease and luxury, and impelled from within to make his external life conform to the teaching of Vedanta as he had understood it, had resolved to renounce the world. His object was known at the Vedanta Society and it was the subject of some talk at the Vedanta Home.

The question was: How to live the life of renunciation in a country where no provision is made for *sannyasins*, where itinerant monks have never been produced and where religious mendicancy would not be recognized by society? A wandering monk would in America be looked upon and treated as a vagrant. It was a question of some weight, for the young man was determined to carry out his ideal and he was ready to meet the consequences.

There are monasteries in America where Roman Catholics who renounce the world find shelter and every opportunity to live a strict and holy life. But to be allowed entrance into these

monasteries one has to subscribe to the creed of the Roman Catholic church. This the young student of Vedanta could not do. The only choice he had was either to live in the streets of New York and beg his food, or go to a place not far from New York where some good people were living who were ready to receive him. The first course would mean arrest by the police for vagrancy, the other course would mean hard physical labor, for which he was ill-fitted. He chose the latter course.

This question being discussed at the Vedanta Home, one of Swami Abhedananda's students was strongly impressed with the idea that the Vedanta movement should have a place of retreat where those who wished to renounce the world, temporarily or permanently, could find refuge under suitable conditions. She possessed a homestead in California—160 acres of free government land. And this place, she thought, could answer the purpose. It had its disadvantages, it was fifty miles from the nearest railway station and market, but it would do to begin with. It would be solitary anyhow. And she very generously offered this place to Swami Vivekananda to be used as a Vedanta retreat.

Swamiji was willing to accept the gift, but he could not return to California then to take charge of the place himself. So it was decided that Swami Turiyananda should go there and open an ashrama for the students of Vedanta. "Go there," Swamiji told him, "put your life into the work, live like a *sannyasin* and forget India." The swami obeyed except, I am afraid, in one respect—he could not entirely forget India, his beloved motherland. "You understand," he said one day in the Ashrama, "how I love you all, how I feel at one with you. I regard you as my own people. In fact, at times I forget that I am in a foreign land. But to forget India altogether, that is not possible."

I have sometimes met with Hindus who seem to think that loyalty to their own country necessitates depreciation of everything foreign, no matter how good and praiseworthy it may be. It is needless to say these gentlemen have never visited foreign lands. None of the swamis in the West shared such narrow views. Swami Turiyananda was very open-minded. He appreciated what was good in the West, and sometimes he would give vent to his feelings. "How strong and

independent are your women; what a nice relationship there is between the sexes; I like the way in which you treat your servants; with all your activity you are so subdued in your speech—there is no shouting and loud talk; you are so orderly and punctual, and you keep everything so neat and clean"; etc. But India was the holy land, the land of wisdom and of sages. And he loved India with all his heart.

Swami Turiyananda then went to California. Miss Boock, the kind donor of the land for the prospective ashrama, accompanied him. They first went to Los Angeles where Swamiji's friends received them warmly. The swami was entertained at the same home that had been blessed by having had Swamiji as its guest.* There were three sisters there, enthusiastic Vedantists—"the three Graces," as Swamiji jokingly called them. The swami was delighted with the country. He was taken to the seashore, visited surrounding towns, saw the orange groves for which California is famous, and he had a very pleasant time there. But he never forgot his Mother. Teaching and talking and holding classes, the swami became an influence in Los Angeles. The people wanted to keep him there, but he was sent for other work. So after a few weeks' stay in that beautiful city, he took the train for San Francisco, accompanied by one or two of his Los Angeles friends.

In San Francisco the swami met with an enthusiastic reception. The students of that lively western city expected much from him, for it was to them that Swamiji had said, when leaving San Francisco: "I have only talked, but I shall send you one of my brethren who will show you how to live what I have taught."

A few of Swamiji's students had clubbed together and had formed a small nucleus—the Vedanta Society of San Francisco. With these few friends the swami began to work, and gradually the number increased. Then came the day on which the swami started out for the great work for which he had been sent to California. With a dozen students he set out for

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* 309 Monterey Road, South Pasadena, which is now under the Vedanta Society of Southern California.

the San Antone valley to found the Shanti Ashrama, the first Vedanta retreat in America.

It was a long journey from San Francisco to the new place —first by train to San Jose, then by a four-horse stage, following a winding road to the "Lick Observatory" on top of Mount Hamilton, 4400 feet high; then by carriage down to the valley. But the journey was by no means tedious. The beautiful mountain scenery, the bracing air, the fruit orchards, olive groves and vineyards, the enthusiasm of the enterprising party, the swami's chanting and interesting conversation, made the trip one long delight. The students were elated.

8

LIFE AT THE SHANTI ASHRAMA

During one of his classes in San Francisco, Swami Turiyananda had told his students how his Master had told him that first of all he should try to realize God and then he could live and work in the world. "Be like the lotus leaf," the Master had said. "The lotus leaf floats on the surface of the water, but no water adheres to the leaf. Or be like butter. Before the milk is churned the butter is mixed with the milk; but after churning the milk, the butter floats on top and can no longer be mixed with the milk. So first churn your mind and get the butter of realization. Then you can live in the world without fear of getting entangled again."

And now on their way to the Ashrama, the Swami turned to the youngest student in the party and said: "Well, Ida, why did you come with us? You are only a young girl. What shall you do there?" "Oh, Swami," she replied, "I am going there because I want to become butter." The answer pleased the swami immensely. "Yes, certainly," he said, "you will become butter, if you try hard."

After a pleasant journey then, the party reached what was to be their new abode. Far, far away from human habitation the place stretched out before them in a rolling, hilly country. Oak, pine, chaparral, chamisal and manzanita covered part of

the land; the other part was flat and covered with grass. Here in the solitary forest retreat the students were to live with their teacher. They had left friends and home and luxury to give themselves up to God—to realize His presence within their own hearts, to hear, to meditate on, and to realize the truth taught by Vedanta. Here they were to forget what the world holds so dear; here they were to search for Him "who is nearer to us than anything—the Atman—dearer than a son, dearer than wealth, dearer than all"; here they wanted to rise to that realm which lies "beyond hunger and thirst, sorrow, passion, old age and death, beyond the desire for sons, wealth and heaven"; here they would strive to stand in the strength of their real Self—to reach that state of which the *rishis* have spoken: "Then a father is no longer father, a mother no longer mother, the world no longer world, a thief no longer thief. He who has realized this state is not affected by good and evil, for he has then overcome all the sorrows of the heart." It was a noble step that these few students had taken. And the reward would be theirs in varying degrees. None ever left the Ashrama just the same as he had entered there. The fire was burning and none did escape its beneficial warmth. A spark was caught by everyone.

But upon arriving, difficulties presented themselves. Where to sleep? There was only one old log cabin. Where to get water? It had to be brought from a long distance. Swami Turiyananda was a little disheartened. He walked up and down. "Where have you brought us?" he said to one of the students. But the students were Americans from the old stock of early pioneers who had braved danger and difficulties without a murmur. In their big wagons they had travelled from eastern states for months together—through deserts and over mountain passes, fording rivers and crossing prairies, and always surviving from the attack of the Red Indians to reach the far Wild West, as California was called in the old days. These descendants of that hardy race were not so easily daunted. Some of them knew camplife and they soon made things bearable. But the swami feared that the hardships might be too severe for them, and he complained to the Divine Mother as he paced up and down: "Mother, what have

you done? What do you mean by this? These people will die—no shelter, no water. What shall they do?"

One of the students not understanding this mood thought that the swami had lost faith. She went to him and said: "Swami, why are you dejected? Where is your Mother? Have you lost faith in Her? Do not fear. She will make everything all right." The swami was struck with wonder. This woman, he thought, accustomed to a pleasant home and easy city-life, is so brave! He straightened up and said, "Yes, you are right. Mother will protect us. How great is your faith! Your name henceforth will be Shraddha ('one who has firm faith in God')." And Shraddha she was called ever since.

Gradually things came into shape. Tents were pitched, a well was dug, and a meditation cabin was erected. One gentleman was especially helpful in arranging everything. He was energetic, handy with tools, and always obliging—helping where help was needed. The swami loved him and called him Sadhu-Charan—"follower of the sages." And so, in a short time the place was made more comfortable and a life of daily routine was established.

We used to rise at five o'clock in the morning, and the swami and the men would take their bath at the well at some distance from the main camp. This habit was kept up summer and winter. In the winter we had to take a lantern to light our way, and it would sometimes be so cold that on returning from our bath we would find that our wet towels had become frozen stiff. Then a fire was lit in the meditation room (in the summer we meditated under the trees), and we would all gather there. The swami chanted and then we meditated for one hour. After meditation the women prepared breakfast and the men engaged in different duties—carrying water from the well, chopping wood, planting a vegetable garden, building wooden cabins, etc. Swami Turiyananda took a lively interest in everything and he shared heartily in the work. At eight o'clock breakfast was served in the canvas dining room. The mountain air and the exercise had given us a good appetite and we were in the pink of health. Breakfast was a most enjoyable hour. The swami would talk on all kinds of subjects, and everyone joined in the conversation. But the swami was always careful to keep the drift of the conversation

see how I trust everyone and I leave everyone free? That I can do, because I know that you all love me. There is no hitch anywhere—all goes on smoothly. But remember, it is all Mother's doing. I have nothing to do with it. She has given us that mutual love that Her work may flourish. As long as we remain true to Her, there is no fear that anything will go wrong. But the moment we forget Her there will be great danger. Therefore I always ask you to think of Mother."

Once a student versed in Christian Science asked: "Is it not our duty to keep our body healthy?" "Yes," said the swami. "But from the highest standpoint, body itself is the great disease. We want to go beyond the idea of body and to realize that we are the Atman. It is the love for our body that stands in the way to our realization of that higher state where we can say: 'I am not this body. I am the Atman. The body is an illusion.' As long as we love the body we cannot realize the Self, and we shall be born again and again. But when we love the Atman then we become indifferent towards the body. And when all love for the body goes, liberation will come very soon."

One of the students was psychic. One day Swami Turiyananda found her practicing automatic writing. Making her mind passive, she sat with a pencil in her hand, and automatic writing would begin. The hand would begin to move and write, and our friend would see afterwards what was written. In that way beautiful things would be written on the paper. But when the swami saw her thus engaged, he rebuked her severely. "What is this foolishness?" he called out. "Do you want to be controlled by spooks? Give up that nonsense. We want *mukti*, liberation. We want to go beyond this world and all worlds. Why should you want to communicate with the departed? Leave them in peace. It is all *maya*. Get out of *maya* and be free!"

To live with Swami Turiyananda was a constant joy and inspiration. It was also an education, for one was learning all the time. And we all felt that spiritual help came through him. Sometimes gentle, sometimes the "roaring lion of Vedanta," the swami was always fully awake. There was not a dull moment in the Ashrama.

Different austerities were practiced, but they were done individually. The swami never asked us to do them. Austerity came spontaneously to some of the students. One would restrict his diet, another would observe silence, a third would remain in solitude, etc. Everyone was at it with a will. No one could remain lukewarm with such a spiritual dynamo in their midst.

We were all vegetarians, and we did not kill or allow outsiders to kill game on the premises. But how far was this principle of non-killing to be carried? It had never been the subject of our special attention, as there had been no occasion for it to be. But once an occasion unexpectedly arose. The swami occupied a tent with a wooden floor. There was a little space between the floor and the earth. And one day, just as the swami was about to enter his tent, a big rattlesnake was seen to enter into the space under the floor. What was to be done? The snake might enter the tent some day. It was easy enough with long sticks to drive her from her hiding place; but what then? Should we kill her, or not? A war-council was held on the spot. The swami left the decision to us. There was a slight difference of opinion, but the majority was for non-killing. "Let us catch her," we said, "and carry her off to the hills. She can do no harm there." But how to bag the cat? To catch a large, venomous snake and carry her off was not so easy. But we managed it. The snake was driven from under the tent, and we stood around her at a respectable distance. She was rattling with all her might—evidently angry—but she did not try to attack. Very watchful, she lay coiled up, her head raised and turned towards anyone who ventured closer.

First of all we held her down with long sticks, and then managed to put a loop of string round her neck. Two of us carried her to a safe distance, holding her aloft by each end of the string. There we again held her down with sticks as before and carefully cut the pieces of rope on either side. After performing this feat in which Sadhu-Charan, of course, had taken the most active part, we came back satisfied that the trouble was over. But to our surprise there she was again, and we readily recognized her by the loop round her neck. Again a similar campaign was undergone, and again she had to be

removed to a goodly distance to ensure safety. Afterwards we used to refer to her playfully as the "snake with the necktie."

With such little occasional variations our life of austerity and meditation glided smoothly on.

I remember quite well an incident in the Ashrama when we were all seated at the dining table. The meal was long over, but no one got up—no one stirred for fear of interrupting the flow of the swami's word. From his lips came the most sacred and sublime truths we had ever listened to.

The swami spoke of his Master. He told us how, when he saw the Master for the first time, he was reminded of Shukadeva. The Master had stepped out from a carriage supported by Hriday—for he was in *samadhi*—and had staggered like one intoxicated. His face had shone with a divine light and had expressed the great bliss he was enjoying. Then he had entered the home of a devotee and, when seated, began to sing in a sweet voice and with intense feeling the glory of Mother Kali.

Later, at Dakshineswar, the Master had taught the swami to surrender himself to God rather than to count on his own strength. The swami told us of the Master's great love and of his childlike simplicity.

"And once," he said in a hushed voice, "our Lord told us that he had other disciples who spoke a different language and who had different customs, somewhere far away in the West. 'These also will worship me,' the Master had said. 'These also are Mother's children.' You are these disciples," the swami said very solemnly. "Mother has revealed it to me."

There was dead silence. We could hardly believe it. We were stirred to the depths of our hearts.

At last one of the students broke the silence. "Swami," she confessed timidly, "I can't believe that I am worthy of such a blessing."

The swami was visibly moved. First he did not reply. Then with marked excitement he questioned, "Who is worthy? Does God weigh our worthiness? 'The first shall be last, and the last shall be first.' [Matthew 19. 30] I tell you, good or bad, you are Mother's child." This student, shortly after, passed away uttering with her last breath the name of Sri Ramakrishna.

There were at the Ashrama some students who had been religious teachers themselves. They taught that diseases could be cured by mental suggestion. They were good people who lived pure lives, who had limited ideas that were difficult to uproot. The main trouble with them was, the swami noticed, that they were self-righteous and hard to teach. They did not understand the need of renunciation. They believed in health and prosperity and a good, clean, moral life.

"You are always speaking of being good," the swami said to them. "That is your highest ideal. We, in India, want *mukti*, liberation. You believe in sin, so you want to conquer sin by being good. We believe ignorance to be the great evil, so we want to conquer ignorance with *jnana*, wisdom. And *jnana* is *mukti*. 'Know the Truth,' Jesus said, 'and the Truth will make you free.'"

Once when a student asked him why there is so much evil in the world, Swami Turiyananda replied: "Tulsidas says, 'To the good the world is full of good, but to the bad the world is full of evil.' The world is neither good nor bad. What I call good, you perhaps call bad, and the reverse. Where is the standard? The standard is in our own attitude towards life. Each one has his own standard. And with increased experience and insight, the standard changes. The pity is that we still recognize evil. When we become perfectly good ourselves, the whole world will appear good. We see only the reflection of our own minds. See the Lord always in everything, and you will see no evil."

When asked to explain this more fully, he said, "A suspicious mind sees evil everywhere; a trusting mind sees only good. Have you ever seen a jealous woman? She is always suspicious. Her husband may be a good man, but no matter what he says or does, the wife will find something to justify her jealousy. A quarrelsome person constantly finds something to quarrel about; a peaceful person finds no one to quarrel with. I find so many people here with fixed notions. They have one set idea that colors everything. They cannot get away from it. Everything is explained according to that one idea.

"Some persons always want to argue. They often have little brain and cannot see a point—still they must argue. Then there are over-sensitive persons. They are always on the

defensive. Whatever general statement you make, they take as being directed towards them—to attack them. All these are causes for evil. But the evil is not in the world, it is in the persons. It is all a matter of misunderstanding. If we understood each other better, there would be less evil.

"But who wants to understand? Everyone is shut up within his own ego. From that prison we judge the world. The remedy is to see the Lord in all. 'He who sees Me in all, and all in Me,' Sri Krishna says, 'he finds peace.' See the Lord, and you will see good everywhere."

In the Shanti Ashrama one afternoon all the students went with Swami Turiyananda for a walk. We came to a high hill which we ascended. There, seated on the ground under the pine trees, the swami said in the course of conversation, "Mother is very proud and very pure. She wears a heavy veil that none may lift except Her children. When they look behind the veil, She is happy and smiles."

"What is Mother, and where is She?" a young student asked.

"She is everything and everywhere," the swami replied. "She permeates nature. She is nature. But talk won't do. You must lift the veil."

"How, Swami?"

"Through meditation," the swami replied.

Then with great emphasis he replied, "Meditate, meditate, meditate! What are you doing? You are frittering away your life. Think deeply, pray to Mother, go beneath the semblance of things, and see the One Reality in all. 'The Lord, O Arjuna, dwells in the hearts of all beings . . . Verily, this divine *maya* of Mine is difficult to cross over; those who devote themselves to Me alone cross over this illusion.' You are a young man; now is the time. Don't let this opportunity slip by. Realization is for the young, the strong, the energetic. Have one aim in life—namely, to know Mother. Renounce, renounce. Give up the world. There is no liberation without renunciation."

Once a strange thing happened. The swami had told us in our morning class in the Shanti Ashrama many secret things in the life of his Master. After the class, when he came to the tent he then occupied, he told me that he had accidentally bitten his own tongue. A little blood even came in his mouth. Then he said, "Perhaps Mother was not pleased that I

revealed so many secrets about the Master. It may be that some of the students are not ready for the higher teachings."

In those days the word "Mother" was constantly on his lips: "Mother tells me to do this," or "Mother wants me to tell you that." The swami felt that the Divine Mother was guiding him in every way—that She was directing all his actions, even his speech.

It was in this same spirit of trusting in God alone that the swami was very strongly opposed to all planning. There also, he used almost the identical language: "Why do you plan? Why are you scheming? Why do you look so far ahead? Let Mother plan. Her plan comes true. Human planning is all in vain if She does not consent. She knows what will happen. The future is an open book to Her. Live in the present; make the best of your time and opportunities. Don't think of the future. Know it for certain that Mother's will shall come to pass. Trust in Her. Only try to love Her sincerely. Give yourself to Her. Let Her do with you as She wishes." But on one occasion he added, "Trusting in Mother does not mean idleness. Try to know Her will, and then be up and doing like a man. Don't you see? I am never idle. The mind must be occupied in some way or another. If you don't do physical work you must use your mind—read, study, or meditate. And don't spend your time in idle gossip. Gossip breeds mischief. If you talk, talk of the Lord."

Of reading, Swami Turiyananda gave us the advice to read only books written by men of realization. When he found a lady student studying a book of New Thought, he told her, "Go to the source. Don't waste your time reading the ideas of every fool who wants to preach religion. There are thousands of books on religion. You cannot read them all. Therefore select the best. Only those who have realized the truth can speak with authority. Otherwise it is the blind leading the blind. Both come to grief; both fall into the ditch. Only the true guru can lead us right, and the true guru is he who knows Brahman."

Sometimes, but not often, when he detected a weak spot in some student, he would ask him or her to perform some form of *sadhana*. A very talkative gentleman was asked to practice

silence. Others would fast or stay in retirement in their tents, not seeing anyone. Thus the spiritual fire was kept burning.

As we had no servants in the Ashrama, we had to do all the work ourselves. We cooked, washed the pots, gathered fuel, washed our clothing, and even built the cabins ourselves. The swami was very happy to see us do this, and often he would himself help in the work. He even carried water from the well in big canisters and cut up the wood for the kitchen fire. We remonstrated that he should not do physical labor, but the swami would not listen to us. "Unless I give the example," he would say, "why should you all work so hard? Let me share in the work. Many hands make the task light."

Once when he was cutting up wood with a big ax, a splinter of wood flew into his face and cut his nose so that blood came. But he only laughed and said, "I must learn to be a good woodcutter. The children of Sri Ramakrishna must be able to do everything."

The work of Swami Turiyananda at the Shanti Ashrama was character-building. "Be yourself," he used to say, "and be strong. Realization is only for the strong, the pure, and the upright. Remember that you are the Atman. That gives the greatest strength and courage. Be brave; break through the bondage of *maya*. Be like the lion; don't tremble at anything. Swamiji has taught you that every soul is potentially divine. Realize your own divinity, then you will realize that all souls are divine. A cloud obscures the sun. We say, 'There is no sun.' But the sun always shines. So the cloud of ignorance makes us believe that we are weak human beings. But the sun of the Atman is always shining. Remove the cloud of ignorance, and the Atman will reveal itself in your heart. When you realize that, then you are a man. Otherwise you are not different from beasts."

And when asked how this can be realized, he answered, "Through meditation. Meditation is the key that opens the door to Truth. Meditate, meditate! Meditate till light flashes into your mind and the Atman stands self-revealed. Not by talk, not by study—but by meditation alone the Truth is known."

Once it happened that during meditation, a poisonous beetle bit the swami on his hand. He made a motion with his

hand, which threw off the beetle. The swami then thought no more about it. He had not even opened his eyes to see what insect had bitten him. But after an hour or so, his hand began to swell. Then he told us that he had felt the sting of an insect. The swelling increased, and we could not bring it down. The following day the entire arm was swollen, and we became alarmed. What to do? The nearest doctor was fifty miles away. We had no motor—only a horse and a two-wheeled cart. Neither was there a motor road nor a car that could cross the mountains. But something had to be done without further delay. The poison was spreading. Then something unexpected happened. In the evening a gentleman came to our Ashrama on foot. He had walked all the way (fifty miles) and at last had found the Ashrama. When we asked who he was, he told us that he was a doctor. He had come from New York, more than three thousand miles away, and had arrived just at this critical moment. He at once made some incisions, saying that any delay might prove fatal. He had a few simple medicines with him—disinfectants—and soon the swami was out of danger. It was like a miracle. The Mother had sent this young doctor to save the swami's life.

To those who lived with Swami Turiyananda in the Shanti Ashrama, it is a sheer delight to call those days to memory again. The swami was in the prime of manhood—energetic and filled with enthusiasm. He had realized the necessity of a peaceful retreat in the West where life is intense; where with a high material standard of living, the mind is constantly drawn outward; where worldly ambitions and demands call for endless activity; where the spirit is drowned in an ocean of worldly pursuits. He found in the West a restlessness of mind that he had hardly imagined even to exist. But he also realized that given the proper directions these same minds—alert, quick to understand, and tenacious in their purposes—could under proper training become worthy of his attempt to lead them into spiritual channels. The swami, therefore, gave himself heart and soul to this task. He never spared himself. He did not think of his own health or comforts, as he had only one object—namely, to bring these eager students to the feet of his Divine Master.

Swami Vivekananda had called him to this task. He had told him to forget India and to plunge into his new work with no other thought than to do the Master's will. Swami Turiyananda had felt from moment to moment that the Divine Mother was behind him, leading him, and guiding him. He became a channel of the inflow and the outflow of a great spiritual power and had no other thought than to do God's will.

Under such conditions results were inevitable. Such sincerity, self-effacement, and outflow of energy could not go in vain. The students had to respond; the swami's ardor was infectious. At the Shanti Ashrama characters were changed and lives were changed. The very atmosphere of the place began to breathe a different spirit. It was as if the minds of the students, variously constituted as they were, gradually came under the spell of a new charm.

Natural tendencies and ambitions seemed to be transformed—to be replaced by one single ambition—to realize the Truth even in this life. In the Shanti Ashrama we realized the value of association with the wise. And even today, so many years later, the students of Swami Turiyananda look upon him as their true guru—the one who helped them to cross more safely this ocean of life. His memory is, and always will be, sacred to them. And the Shanti Ashrama, to these early students, will always remain a place of pilgrimage, holy atmosphere, and sacred recollections.

In New York, Boston, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, the swami had given public lectures. But lecturing was not to his liking. It was necessary to reach the masses. But his real work was done in classes and with individuals. It was his life—his example—that drew us to the swami. In him we saw a man of realization—a man who lived what he taught. That is why he impressed us. Such a man we had never seen before. From the East light and wisdom had come to us in the West. In the midst of a world of turmoil and striving and worldly ambitions, there was with us one man who counted not name or fame or worldly success, but lived at peace with himself—an inner life dedicated to God and the service of humanity. He was a man who attracted through love and who conquered through love. To his disciples, Swami Turiyananda was the greatest blessing

that ever entered into their lives. To them, his memory is a sacred memory—a memory that strengthens in time of need, a memory that brings sweetness in moments of distress, a memory that stimulates every new attempt to the realization of Truth. To think of Swami Turiyananda is an act of purification of the mind. To remember his life is an impulse to new endeavor.

9

TRANSFORMATION OF LIVES

The Shanti Ashrama was the crowning success of Swami Turiyananda's labor in America. Here his spiritual ardor could have free play. Here he lived far away from the conventionalities of Western life with students who loved him and who were sincere in their desire to realize the Truth. Here he was free. And when I speak of the Shanti Ashrama as a success, I do not mean that there Swami Turiyananda made a large number of disciples, but that those who accepted him as their spiritual teacher were changed—though not all to the same degree—into men and women of higher aspirations, of greater faith, and of some actual spiritual attainment. And this was not a temporary change as the succeeding years have proven. That this work was accomplished in less than two years—part of which time the swami was away from the Ashrama—is little short of marvelous.

I met and lived with those students again, many years after the swami had returned to India, and without a single exception they all agreed that those few months with him in the Shanti Ashrama constituted the most important period in their lives. And that is the reason why the Shanti Ashrama has always remained so dear to those students. The place is to them a holy place to which they return, as circumstances

allow, as one returns to a place of pilgrimage. The memory of those early Ashrama days is and will always remain with the students as an occasion of great happiness and satisfaction. The swami is as beloved to his disciples in America today as he was when he lived there with them—now more than thirty-five years ago.

Some of those Ashrama students have since departed from this world. Shankari was one of the first to be called away. She was a young woman, unmarried, and a member of the Home of Truth in Alameda, across the Bay from San Francisco. The Home of Truth was an offshoot of Christian Science. One of their beliefs was that every disease had its cause in some defect in the character. By knowing the disease the defect of character could be traced. Anger, jealousy, greed, hatred—each of these defects produced its corresponding disease. The cure for the disease was to correct the moral defect.

Swami Vivekananda had been a guest at the Home of Truth for several weeks. He left a deep impression there, and many of the teachers of this Home became his followers. When Swami Turiyananda came to California, they flocked around him, and not a few of them accompanied him to the Shanti Ashrama. Shankari was one of them. She often told me how Swamiji would keep the members of the Home spellbound when he talked to them about Vedanta. For hours Swamiji would go on and on and the listeners, fearing to interrupt the flow of his spiritual outpouring, dared not stir. With bated breath they would sit and listen. They were carried off their feet, as it were, by his eloquence. They felt as if they were soaring in a higher sphere. They were entranced. And only after Swamiji was silent would they feel themselves tied again to this mundane existence. "You have been bitten by the cobra," Swamiji said one morning. "The poison will have its effect. You will never be your old selves again. The Master has accepted you."

Those who had really been "bitten by the cobra" could not return to their former practices. The Home of Truth became too narrow a place for them. They had to breathe a freer air, and the Shanti Ashrama afforded them breathing space. Here they were with him who "lived what I have taught you." And under this loving guidance, they also were to live what they

had learned. Shankari was amongst these aspirants—sincere to the backbone.

Some years after Swami Turiyananda had returned to India, Shankari contracted a painful disease. Patiently and with great courage she battled with the enemy. She suffered pain without complaint, and she struggled silently. But the disease had taken a firm hold on her and she could not shake it off. The end was drawing near, and she realized that her days on earth were numbered. Loving friends surrounded her and nursed her with tender care. Then one day she called for one of her most intimate friends, whose acquaintance she had made at the Shanti Ashrama. "Mira," she said, "the Master is calling me. Will you repeat his name to me?" This friend stayed at her bedside the entire day and the following night. In turns she and the patient called on the Lord. Shankari grew weaker and weaker. Her voice came in a whisper. "Do not exert yourself, dear," Mira said. "I am strong and I shall continue to call on the Lord." Satisfied and with a smile she obeyed. Early morning came. The patient was very weak. She moved her head slightly as if trying to look at Mira. A soft whisper came—Ramakrishna; and the lips were silent forever. The wasted body remained; the spirit was free. "You have been bitten by the cobra. The Master has accepted you."

This is but one example of the change wrought in the hearts of the students who came to the Ashrama. It is true, the initial change in most of the students had taken place before they came to the Ashrama. Otherwise they would probably not have gone there. But could that change have been sustained and pushed onward had they not had the opportunity of breaking away from their old surroundings and influences, had they not been constantly encouraged and ministered unto by Swami Turiyananda?

Unfortunately, excess of work had affected Swami Turiyananda's health and this, combined with the desire to see Swami Vivekananda once more, made him decide to return to India, at least for a visit. Much as we regretted it, we understood that the change was necessary. We hoped that the long sea voyage would restore the swami's health and that in India he would find the rest he needed. We realized that it would be a great satisfaction to him to meet his beloved Swamiji again

and his other brother *sannyasins*. We hoped that after a few years, at the most, we would have the swami with us again.

During our long association with him, Swami Turiyananda had sometimes told us about the life of the *sannyasins* in India: how these monks renounce everything for God, and how they wander over the land preaching, teaching, and begging their simple fare. He had sometimes spoken of the grandeur of the Himalayas, the simple life of the villagers, the holy atmosphere at places of pilgrimage, and more often about the beauty and the sacredness associated with his beloved "Mother Ganges." But seldom did he dwell on the mere physical aspect of things. Once he said: "You see, I have learned to look for beauty within, so the external beauty of things does not always affect me as it does those who look for beauty outside." In fact, we had not learned very much about the ordinary, everyday life and customs of the Hindus as a race. India had been presented and interpreted to us from the spiritual aspect.

And now, when Swami Turiyananda was about to leave us, I said to him jokingly: "Swami, I have lived with you so long, but I do not know much more about India than when I first met you." The swami's reply was very significant. "My boy," he said, "I have given you the very best that India has to give. It is a great treasure. Keep it carefully."

I have now lived in India many years and I realize how very true these words are. Yes, Swami Turiyananda had given us the very best that India had to give—that priceless treasure that India has fostered for countless ages and that now once more she offers freely to all the world.

Swami Turiyananda had made us Hindus even while we were living in America. We had been transformed; we had been made to assimilate that for which India and her people have always stood. He had made us love and admire the soul, the life-throb, and the ideals of the Hindus, and had made us understand that the pulse-beat of India is her eternal religion. To become a Hindu is a process that cannot be forced by external means; it is a natural growth, assimilation, and change in the mental make-up. To become a true Hindu involves experiences of a sacred nature, which one does not

get by simply visiting this holy land—experiences that go beyond the surface and relate to the soul.

India possesses something that lies beyond the phenomenal—deep hidden in the human heart—which the senses cannot bring to our notice. When we come in contact with that, then we become a true Hindu. To be a true Hindu, we must become the spiritual child of the Indian *rishis* and sages, sit (metaphorically speaking) at their feet and learn, and attempt to follow in their footsteps. Then we are true Hindus, with one common aim—to work out our own salvation and to live for the good of all.

The swami had taught us to make God-realization the one aim of our life. He had shown us the way. It rested with us how far we would profit by his teaching. "My work for the present is done," he said. "I have not left anything unfinished. Mother knows the rest. This Ashrama is Mother's place. She has created this place for you all. Make the best use of it."

And so the day drew near when the swami was about to leave us. One of the students was to take charge of the Ashrama till the arrival from India of another swami. Swami Turiyananda called this student to his tent on the eve of his departure.

As we have already noticed, the swami left everyone free to work in his own way. He only suggested and taught principles. Meditation, he always said, was necessary—meditation and renunciation. So, when he called this student, he gave him only general advice. "Be impartial, listen patiently if there is any complaint, be just and pure, and trust in Mother. Treat everyone equally and let the students feel that you love each and everyone of them." This, I think, was the sum and substance of his last instruction. And then the swami departed.

The same student who was left in charge of the Shanti Ashrama now, had been in charge during Swami Turiyananda's absence for a few months when, at the earnest request of the students of Los Angeles and San Francisco, the swami had gone to work with them. And here I may give a few extracts from letters written by Swami Turiyananda during his absence to the student in charge of the Ashrama. It will give the reader an idea of the spirit in which the work was conducted—a spirit which the swami constantly kept alive and

which after him the students have tried to keep alive to the best of their ability and with earnest endeavor.

Swami Turiyananda wrote from Los Angeles in the year 1901.

My dear —

Don't get discouraged or disheartened. Why should it be always sunshine and good times? Let Mother's will be done. Never mind sunshine or rain, we must not forget Mother at any time. Even if we don't see Her, why should we lose heart? She appears again in our view. She knows what is best for us. Once we have given over to Her, what right have we to think of ourselves again? It is not so easy to do as to say—of that I am sure, but there is no other way out. Whether we see or don't see, Mother is our only place of rest. There are ups and downs in all hearts, but we should not give way to them.

Real, genuine sympathy alone works wonders. That is the one thing omnipotent in this world of sorrows and weaknesses. Ask of Mother for that and you will have it. Think not about yourself but only for others. That is renunciation, that is religion, that is all. You have died, why do you think of yourself? Have you not given everything over to Mother? Why then think of yourself again? Never care for position. Give up all such ideas. Work is worship. Everything is in the life we live, not in position. Mother knows the heart and sees the heart and arranges things accordingly. Let your light so shine that everybody can see it. Let your work be silent and in secret and your Mother who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. The fowls of the air have their nests to rest, but the Son of man had nowhere to lay his head. Jesus had no position, and millions and millions of hearts are his place, or he is the place where millions of weary souls go for rest. Go on my dear boy; live the life. Pray for it earnestly and sincerely.

It pleased me immensely to read the account of the celebration in the Ashrama of Sri Ramakrishna's birthday anniversary. We observed the day here in talk of him and prayer. May Sri Ramakrishna arouse in us the real spirit

of renunciation and love for Mother, whose very personification he himself was.

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Be strong, my dear boy! Don't give in to anything whatever. It is not good to be weak; the weak must go to the wall. This is the law of the world. But what have you to do with the world any more? Mother's child, good or bad, weak or strong, you have no other to look up to but Mother! Others, who do not know, may think of temporal help. But you can never think that way, I am sure!

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Sri Ramakrishna is the concrete embodiment of the Vedantic Truth, because in his life he manifested in full all the subtle truths that we read in the Vedanta philosophy. Pray for unflinching love and devotion and you will have everything.

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There is no world outside. It is what we project outside. But how difficult it is to understand this, and how much more difficult to remember it always, even after understanding it.

We feel unhappy when we make ourselves small. We feel miserable when we think of ourselves as finite. That is the bane. Yet we forget and are in the whirlpool of *Maya* ever once again. But thanks to the grace of Mother, we remember it again soon. "There is no happiness in that which is finite; that which is finite is perishable. That which is universal is Blissfulness Itself." Know the universal! That is thy real Self.

May we never lose sight of this our real Self, which is the Self of all, our dear Mother, whose children we are.

The reader will readily understand how helpful, how encouraging, and how welcome these letters were.

10

THE LAST OF THE DIRECT DISCIPLES

A year or so after Swami Turiyananda had left America, Swami Trigunatita came from India to carry on the Vedanta work in California. He was the last of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna that have come to America so far.

Cheerful, loving, strong in carrying out his own ideas, with an abundance of energy, Swami Trigunatita at once set to work to create an atmosphere of his own. He was strongly in favor of organization, and it is through his energetic efforts that San Francisco today is in possession of what the swami called the first Hindu Temple in the West. The name is rather misleading to Hindu readers, for there is little in the building to suggest an Indian temple. But it is a strong center of the Vedanta work in California. The swami was exceedingly active, and this quality, combined with his loving and cheerful nature, drew the admiration of some men and women who became his staunch disciples.

Though the swami's main effort was concentrated on the San Francisco work, he sometimes came to the Shanti Ashrama with some of his students, and he added considerably to the improvement of the place. He also visited Los Angeles on more than one occasion, and his field of action was extended even to the state of Oregon.

11

WHAT VEDANTA HAS DONE

What Vedanta has really done for us in the West is not always clearly understood in India. Of course, everyone knows that it has been a great factor in liberating the Western mind from religious bondage and to clear the atmosphere of superstitions. This, however, science had also done. Science had played havoc with most of the church doctrines and superstitions. But the work of science was entirely of a negative nature; in a religious sense it was destructive. It broke down but did not erect. It left the West stranded as far as religion was concerned. Church doctrines were no longer tolerable because they were simply not true. The doctrine of an anthropomorphic deity creating the universe out of nihil, and then even after consigning by far the greater part of his created creatures to eternal hell-fire, is preposterous.

Except, of course, with her devotees, religion received a bad name in the West. The word religion became a stigma. And the West was divided into two parties—the believers who accepted the Bible as a whole—who did not question (they did not dare to question)—and the liberals who just as wholeheartedly rejected the scriptures as a mass of nonsense. There was no middle way—not a single point of conciliation or sympathy. The two parties kept aloof and heartily despised

each other. This is putting it strongly, perhaps, but it was the state of affairs in Europe as I knew it fifty years ago.

Children of orthodox parents were nicknamed and gibed by the boys of liberal parents. Many of these children naturally felt ashamed of the religion of their parents, and they began to hate the very name of religion. And so the West became more and more atheistic and materialistic.

Then came Theosophy, Christian Science, and New Thought —all trying to bridge the gulf between belief and unbelief. But the scientific mind was not satisfied. New superstitions replacing old superstitions was the verdict. And then at last came Swami Vivekananda with pure Vedanta. The liberals could accept or reject, but they could no longer sneer. Scientists could demand further proof, but they could not condemn. Those who were religiously inclined, but could not follow the church, found a new opening. Here was religion, philosophy, and science combined. Heart and intellect could both be satisfied. There was no necessity of severing from old traditions altogether. One could remain true to the old faith, but that old faith was reinterpreted and cleansed of its later growths. Those who wished to do so could go back to Jesus and the Bible, for now they understood. There was doubt, vacillation, and hesitation; but approaches were made. It was worthwhile investigating. In short, it was a reconciliation, a middle way. The liberals were silenced and the orthodox party found it wise to keep hands off, but there was an opening for both. And the success which Swamiji met with in the West, and later his successors, shows that many adherents to both parties availed themselves of this novel opportunity of listening to men who carried a message of hope and security—a message that outraged neither religion, philosophy or science, and that embraced all that was best in the culture of the West.

Vedanta was the leaven that leavened the thought-world in the West. How far this leavening process will continue to assert its influence, the future alone can tell. But that there is already a tremendous change in thought in all strata of Western society—orthodox or liberal—no one can deny. Whether Swami Vivekananda and his successors will receive the credit for it, is not the question. It does not matter. The

fact remains; and I dare say, that is all they care for, so far as regards the influence of Vedanta on the West as a whole.

But there is another side to the question—a phase of no less importance—and that is the influence of Vedanta on individuals. Sri Ramakrishna said, and Swami Vivekananda said it after him: "I am willing to be born a thousand times if thereby I can be of help to even a single soul." If these were not vain words—and we know they were not—then this question of the individual takes an important place in their life's work. And those who have watched closely the work of the swamis in America and elsewhere can testify to the fact that many lives have been changed through the self-sacrificing efforts of the swamis. And this is, after all, the crowning success of a religious teacher. The glory of Jesus rests not on the fact that the Western world calls itself Christian today, but on the fact that he made a few true, devoted disciples and that through his teaching, during the ages that have since passed by, now and then a single soul has found salvation.

Religion in the highest sense—as the medium to liberate mankind from world-bondage—is always for the few. And if in the ages to come, now and then in the West, a single soul attains *mukti*, or liberation, through the teaching of Vedanta, the work initiated and carried on by the swamis meets with the success that they had hoped for. Says Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita: "Among thousands of men perchance one or two seek for perfection. Among thousands who seek for perfection, perchance one or two attain to My divine state." And Jesus said:* "What man, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he finds it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. . . . I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons which need no repentance....Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones shall perish."

*Matthew 18: 12-14.

PART III

LETTERS

(Extracts of Letters Written

to Ida Ansell, Ujjvala)

12

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

General Remarks

On Silence

Your packet of letters came a few days ago while I was in retirement for a week to wind up one month of keeping silence. The first part of it I did not speak, but wrote and expressed myself through gestures. Then I found that that was not silence really, so I stopped the writing and gestures—not responding to anyone. It was funny. But, you know, all these gestures, though they may have their use, are not the real thing, which is eternal silence, one-pointedness of mind on the idea. And that is more difficult. You know, Swami Turiyananda kept silence for three months in the Shanti Ashrama. At least, I think it was that long. But he used to write sometimes. I went out for walks as he did, but I had to keep to byways where I was sure not to meet anyone, for here the white people usually greet each other, though strangers. And it would have been too rude not to respond to a well-meant "Good morning." There are only a handful of white people here—not to speak of the natives—who expect their salaams returned.

I did not see the girls [Sarah and Rebecca Fox—see Appendix C] during this last week, which ended today. I broke

my silence reading in Sanskrit the second chapter of the Gita. So I have a good beginning. I passed my days counting my beads [making *japa*] and reading.

Almora, Sept. 25, 1925

A Word of Caution

[The Yiddish lady mentioned in this letter was probably Mrs. Kahlert, a handwriting analyst, to whom Ujjvala was submitting handwriting samples. And Keyserling was the author of the book The French Diary of a Philosopher, *which Gurudas Maharaj was reading.]*

What you write about the Yiddish lady is interesting. She is right in what she says about vain reputation. "A saint by routine," Keyserling says, "is no saint at all. The minute an action becomes a habit, the spirit vanishes from which it emanates. The advantage is lost the moment we take a liking to the chains." Muttering of *mantras* without thinking of the meaning may be better than not doing anything, but that is about all. She is also right about centers of consciousness opening up and causing chaos and confusion in the life. That is why all the swamis ask us to proceed slowly and patiently, not in wild spurts. The nerves are affected, and this may cause serious mental and physical trouble. Many people get eccentric and even insane by going at their religious practices without using caution, just as many an athlete ruins his health by overdoing. Prayer (meditation) and service is all that our swamis recommend. They never advise yoga practices, *pranayama*, postures, etc. People are as superstitious here as elsewhere. And the method of catching the gullible is the same too: giving a crumb and promising a loaf that never materializes. There is a swami who claims he can produce gold, silver, sweetmeats, or anything through the rays of the sun. People had told me they had seen it. So I went. The sun is caught on a mirror and then directed on a magnifying glass. The rays from the magnifying glass do the trick. What he showed me was this: he had a piece of cotton that had no odor. He held it on a little stick in the light of the magnifying glass, and it smelled like rose. Of

course, it was a very simple little trick almost anyone could perform.

Benares, Christmas Day, 1925

Time for Practices

Here, I am quite satisfied alone with nature and my books. It is so beautiful here—the mountains and the forest and an ideal climate. Only in the winter with snow are there some difficulties, as it is far from everything and water is difficult to get at. So I think it better to go down now.

Swami Mokshadananda is with me. He is cheerful and obliging. He meditates much. A really sincere man who tries hard. I have to take my religious practices in small doses. I find it very difficult to meditate now. But I try to surrender more or less during the day. You remember, Sw. Turiyananda used to say, "In old age you cannot do anything. Now is the time, while you are young." It is true. I have to take it easy now. But the ideal is there. And I have faith that in the end all will be well with all of us.

Binsar, December 12, 1930

The Real Aim of Yoga

[Among Paul Brunton's books are A Search in India *and* A Hermit in the Himalayas. *According to Gurudas Maharaj in a letter to Ujjvala, dated October 16, 1937, Brunton used to be among the little group of devotees who would foregather on the flat roof of M.'s house, in Calcutta. One evening, a friend of Gurudas Maharaj—probably Mr. Cooke—engaged Brunton in a rather heated discussion, asserting that married people could not realize God. Gurudas Maharaj wrote: "Brunton didn't agree with such a sweeping statement. I wonder if this did influence B. to write about the swamis as he does."]*

You remember Paul Brunton's books? Now he has a long letter in the *Statesman*, one of the leading English papers in Calcutta—too long to quote, so I enclose it. To me it seems that, by no means, he has plumbed the full depths of yoga, as

he claims to have done. Who has? I doubt if he has understood the real aim of yoga. Yoga should lead to Freedom, as all religious practices should do—to the identification of the individual soul with the Universal Existence. His ideal seems to be mind-improvement and social service. He writes from Mysore in South India. I don't know what he is doing there.

Almora, August 20, 1939

On Study

A Change in Literature

Indeed, a change in literature is very refreshing. Often, after studying straight Vedanta for some time, I find it very helpful to take up the life of one of the saints. I do not know of any book that has helped me so much as the *Life of St. Francis of Assisi*. I have long tried to get the *Life of Madame Guyon*. One book Swami [Turiyananda] asked me to read, but I never got it. It is Max Muller's *India, What Can It Teach Us*.

Shanti Ashrama, August 22, 1902

If Mother Allows

I am now quite accustomed to being here alone. I will try to meditate and study, if Mother will allow. Without Her sanction nothing will avail.

Shanti Ashrama, March 13, 1903

Religion Is Transmitted

[Ujjvala took shorthand notes of Swami Vivekananda's lectures, thirteen of which were transcribed and published in The Complete Works*. When Ujjvala later met Swami Turiyananda, he asked her to take notes of his classes and lectures, but returned to India in 1902, before she was able to write them out fully.]*

Your lectures were rec'd, and I need not tell you that they were very welcome and much appreciated. The talks are simple and, I think, very helpful. We seek so much for the

great things, and thereby overlook the first steps so necessary to remember and to practice. It is indeed a wonderful privilege to be with those teachers and receive from them the highest truth, after getting which nothing else can satisfy. I can well imagine that you regret Swami's [possibly Turiyananda] leaving you to correct the lectures alone, but although much of the pleasurable part is gone, certainly the practice will be helpful to you. How very busy you are now.

Shanti Ashrama, March 22, 1903

Creating a Habit

I have mailed you a bundle of *Vedanta Kesaris* and a few of Gandhi's papers. The girls [the Fox sisters] gave me the *Kesaris*. I think you will enjoy the articles on Sri Ramakrishna. I find that the more I read about him the more I want to read. It creates a habit. And it is a good habit. It increases our love for and understanding of him.

Almora, June 30, 1925

Crest Jewel of Wisdom

[It is important that the following three letter extracts be placed together, because they show that scriptures were given to American students at the Shanti Ashrama in the ancient Upanishadic style. For this reason, there is a chronological jump backwards from the last extract of this selection to the next extract.]

I am also reading the *Crest Jewel of Wisdom* again after ages. I think Swami Turiyananda explained it in the Ashrama [Shanti Ashrama]. You may have the notes of it. If so, it may come useful to you for your article on Sw. Turiyananda [for the *Vedanta and the West* magazine]. But with our early enthusiasm gone, I think the notes seem a little flat. It was all so new to us then.

Almora, July 10, 1926

We have just begun reading *Vivekachudamani* in our class. You remember, Sw. Turiyananda took it up in the Shanti

Ashrama and you took notes. It is all coming back to me —our happy days there. That was an experience to be thankful for. Misfortunes aside, we have been fortunate indeed.

Almora, June 1, 1936

[Throughout these informal letters to Ujjvala, Gurudas Maharaj used an abbreviated spelling of names, including Swami Turiyananda's. Some of those abbreviations have been retained for flavor.]

I don't remember who was editor of *P.B.* [*Prabuddha Bharata*] when I sent Sw. Turiya's translation of the *Crest Jewel* there. I would love to get a copy. It may revive old recollections. Of course, there are better translations now, one by Sw. Madhavananda, secretary of our Mission. But it would please me to see again how Turiyananda gave it to us in a free, off-hand way. How we enjoyed it, and everything that came from his lips. It was all so new to us and so fresh. And we were so eager and enthusiastic. Frank Rhodehamel's articles on "Shanti Ashrama Days," I think, were published in *P.B.* of 1918. I have no back numbers here, so I cannot look it up. But it was not later than that.

Barlowganj, April 21, 1946

Go to the Source

As regards Manly Hall's little paper, it is all right, but it does not interest me. I remember once Swami Turiyananda told me, "If you want to read religious books, read books by men of realization." I am now reading the Bengali Gospel by M. I like it better every day. It is genuine experience, authoritative. I feel it is true, every word. Every school boy now tells you that all religions are true—that science and religion should not be at war. We know that now. Why listen to these kids parroting it? Go to the source. There is one man who rediscovered it in his own way, who realized and practiced it. That is the man I want to read, if I want to read about it at all. Every man has his place. I don't criticize anyone. But I don't

feel any urge to support these talkers. They get their reward. They are all flourishing. If I have a dollar to throw away, I would rather throw it to a starving man than to add to their abundance. *The Message of the East*, I think, is really much more helpful than Hall's paper. Do you get that? Do you send that to people? Do you do anything to help Swamiji's work? We cannot help the whole world and the millions of teachers who have their own hobbies. We have to select and, if possible, to return something for what we have received. What have you received through Vedanta, through Swamiji's teachings? What are you doing in the line of encouragement there? Think of this first, and then we can think of encouraging Manly Hall. This is the way I feel about it.

Almora, August 16, 1927

[Sister Christine was a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, or "Swamiji," as he was often called.]

I hope you are getting the *Prabuddha Bharata* regularly. I like Sister Christine's articles on Swamiji. It will make a nice, little book. After years of light reading, my mind now turns more towards religious books. We are reading M.'s Gospel again. Everything is there to guide one in his spiritual life. The more I read it, the better I like it—repetitions notwithstanding. I sometimes think of what Sw. Turiyananda used to say: "Read only the words from men of realization." But in my own case, a little light reading now and then refreshes the mind.

Well, Ujjie, he also assured us that we are Mother's children. Good or bad, She will look after us. So, no fear. In the end all will be well. After all, in our heart of hearts, we want Her beyond all else. Let the surface mind have its little play. When we get tired of playing, She will come and take us home. "There the sun does not shine, nor the moon, nor stars, nor lightning. What else shines is but Her reflection."

Binsar, November 31, [year missing]

Simple Teachings

[Sri Ramakrishna is often referred to as "Thakur," which means Master.]

I read Dunne's book *An Experiment in Time*. It is difficult to follow, and I feel no inclination now to concentrate on such things. I prefer Thakur's simple teachings. There is a time for everything. Now I try to have simple faith in Thakur's words. He spoke only what he himself had experienced, and that was all of the Vedic teaching. So what more do we want? Thakur told Holy Mother: "I will be three hundred years in a subtle body in the hearts of my devotees. Many devotees are white people."

Binsar, October 16, 1937

Meditation

What Can We Do?

My dear Ujjvala, do not think that I meditate too much. In the first place, is such possible, provided the meditation is well directed? But besides that, I have not been able to meditate so much. What can we do of ourselves? It is only the grace of the Lord that makes things possible for us. All we can do is to do what we consider right for the time, the rest we must leave to Him. This is my sure belief, Ujjvala.

Every now and then I come to this same conclusion. But what of that? Once Mother's child, all is settled! Once accepted, we are His for eternity. That I also believe. Therefore no fear, no complaining, but always ahead with the banner high: "Thy will be done."

Shanti Ashrama, March 22, 1903

Reliving Experiences

Of course, I would never expect you to write your reminiscences in a few hours. I had in mind that you take up the subject a little at a time, adding a few lines now and then, perhaps, for months together. Christine did this in Almora this

time about Swamiji. She had all day to do it and all summer, and she had one hundred typed pages. She enjoyed it too. So many things came to her memory which she thought she had forgotten. Even if nobody should ever see it, she had the blessing of remembering these things again. Sw. Turiyananda once said to me, after I told him some of my experiences, "Gurudas, never forget this." But I find that I *do* forget, and this forgetting is a great loss. When no new experiences come, we have to keep up by remembering facts of the past. To call them up again is a *sadhana*, a spiritual practice. To write them down fixes them firmly in the mind. I thought of your noting them down as something that would again refresh these impressions—would, in a way, make you live them over again, make Sw. Turiyananda more real again, would make you again live in an atmosphere of the past. We do get away from that so imperceptibly; we drift away from the center, we lose sight of the most important event that has entered into our lives. Sri Ramakrishna spoke much of his inner circle of disciples, of those who belonged to him, of those who got salvation in the circle of his being. We don't want to get outside the circle, to go by other paths, searching here and there, losing time and opportunity. "Believe in all gods, but be attached to one" is the Vedanta teaching. Let us make that attachment strong first, even if it may seem a little narrow-minded. Of course, it is refreshing and stimulating to hear and read others. I don't mean that one should not do that. All I mean is that inwardly we must try to strengthen our faith in our Chosen Ideal, that inwardly we must come closer to our center, our circle. And if, as an undercurrent in your consciousness, you could carry the idea of writing about Sw. Turiyananda, facts would come to the surface, and you could write them down as they occur, provided it would give you pleasure to do so. It certainly would give pleasure to others. They are so eager here to hear about his and Swamiji's life in the West, as we are eager to hear their life in India.

Swami Shivananda and Swami Subodhananda (both direct disciples) are here at present. Many of our swamis come from other centers to see them.

Benares, Jan. 10, 1928

Karma Yoga

Office Work and Vedanta Work

As to your question, I have no doubt you know the answer as well as I do. Still let us have a little talk about it. In the first place, you seem to make a distinction between office work and Vedanta work. I know, of course, in what sense you mean it, but at the same time we are all so apt to misapply our knowledge. By Vedanta work, you seem to mean making a booming Vedanta Society, getting many members, plenty of money, a nice Vedanta home, publishing lectures, making bylaws, and a lot of other fuss. But is not Vedanta work better expressed by the strict, honest, conscientious performance of our duties? Now here it all hinges. What do we consider our duty? Our conception of duty will change with our increase of knowledge and wisdom. You are placed under circumstances in which you consider it desirable to earn your own livelihood. This is given you by your employer in exchange for a certain amount of work. That amount of work you give them, otherwise you would be discharged. But what I object to is that you seem afraid to give them a little more. From a worldly standpoint I would consider this unwise. You say, I have no chance for advance, but if not in this office, then they may sometime be able to help you to a better position. Now, of course, they reason this way: "She is worth $40 to us and not a cent more, so as she gives us all she is able to give, she will be worth the same to others, no more." Furthermore, if something should happen, they will say, "We can get plenty of others like her." But now as a Vedantist, is it not mean, low and selfish to hold such an attitude, to weigh your service against dollars? How miserly to give just what is coming to others and not a bit more. How disgusted you must feel after office hours to think how little you care for the prosperity of your employers who give you your maintenance, such a nice position, not too much work, and who are agreeable and considerate of you.

And even after doing your work to the very best of your ability, you will have some spare time in which you can quietly collect yourself and think of the unreality of life—that you are the Atman, not this busy body and mind, and to repeat reverently and devotedly the name of the Lord. Isn't that more

satisfactory than to stealthily do work for the Vedanta Society, often in times when office work ought to be done? Religion can only be built on a firm character. Doing our duty well is character-building, and on that we can build spirituality. Our life must show that we are Vedantists. What good is there in talk? If we have gotten hold of something higher, nobler, more uplifting than most people, then our employers will be the first to notice it. They will find that they can depend on us under all circumstances. We are there—steady, unmoving as a rock. When we are there, they will feel safe. And then our work will not hurt us.

As we have been faithful in our duty during the day, we will also be faithful in our hour of leisure. When the evening comes, we put our office duties aside and approach our Divine Mother with a clear conscience. Then we can meditate, and our evenings we can spend in religious study or exercises. Our recreation will be of that nature.

My dear Ujjvala, you have such splendid opportunity, do not mix yourself up so much in externals. What do you care for that? We want to realize the Atman. Our object in life is not to make a big Vedanta Society. Let those have it who want it. You care for higher things. Forget not the teachings we have had so long. Let it not all be "pearls thrown before swine." You will please excuse me. I am only speaking to myself, you understand that. And Ujjvala, please never make any allusions to me as being more spiritual, or something like that. It is very painful to me. We are all Mother's children. That is quite enough.

Shanti Ashrama, June 22, 1903

Jnana Yoga

Atman Alone Abides, but Mother Alone Decides

[Mailey was a charlatan who posed as "Ram Maharaj" in America and India, holding classes as a bonafide swami and incurring debts throughout both countries.]

Mother India was simply an interesting phenomenon, a curious working of the human mind. Thus far, it was interesting. Nivedita went to the other extreme—just as interesting. Some of our swamis are saintly, some others have to be sent out. All are equally interesting—all are studies, all Mother's play. No one to praise, no one to blame—all Mother's children. A right step, a false step—all part of the play. That is why it always amuses me when you hide things, when you want to protect people's reputations.

I neither believe nor disbelieve. I see and hear—and then it is gone. Let others form opinions, judge, criticize. To me, life is a moving picture. See it and forget it. Don't close your eyes; don't take sides. What I want now is to be able to include myself in the picture, to be the mere Witness to myself also in pain, in pleasure, in health and sickness, in good deeds and bad deeds. Look, stand aside, see what this funny creature Gurudasa is doing. And know that I am not this—that I am free, the Atman—that all are free, the Atman. What we see are the actors on the stage—today beggar, tomorrow king; today sinner, tomorrow saint. It is always the same person playing different parts. So it is difficult to shock me or make me feel different towards persons, even if they make a mistake.

Take Mailey—I am now convinced that he plays the part of an irresponsible creature. So I protect myself. But my feeling towards him is not changed. I will receive him if he comes, just as before. It is an interesting study of human behavior. What more? What less? If you ask me, "Can you trust him?" I don't try to hide or to protect him from you. I say, "Be careful. He may fool you." But that does not mean that I wish him ill or that I am not ready to stand by him. Only, I know that if I or you lend him money, there is a good chance of never seeing your money again. But if I can spare it, I may give it to him. Why not? Let him have his fun, get his experience. Mother's child, Mother's play.

And I am glad to meet all characters, just as I am glad to read about them. I am as interested in Dempsey [i.e., Jack Dempsey, the boxer] and Barnum [i.e., Barnum and Bailey circus], etc. as in the saints. I would be just as much interested to meet them or to see them in action. Books *for* India, books

against India—they are equally interesting to me, if they are written equally well.

And I think Mira [Mrs. Magee] was just like that. She was a big character. Saints and sinners were equally interesting to her. There is such a thing as natural attraction; but there it ends. We choose our companions, but we don't despise others. They have their own playfield. Let them have their own fun. Judge not. Look on, if you like; otherwise, pass on.

When I say that I want to include myself in the picture, I don't pretend to have succeeded, except during fleeting moments. I am exceedingly sensitive to pain and fear it. I mean that this seems to me the ideal life. Do, act, take part if you like, but remain detached—the Witness. And, I think, that is Sri Krishna's attitude, his teaching. To him, saint or sinner are alike. He neither hates nor loves (in an attached sense). He distributes *karma* impartially. Let the play go on.

Swami Turiyananda once told me that when he read that when Krishna made the designs for his capital, he designed one part of the city for prostitutes to live. Swami was horrified. Why did he allow prostitutes in his ideal city? Then, later he understood. They also have a right to live—they fill their place in the picture, they do their share in the play. Without them the play would not be complete. Let each choose his own part; let him play it well. And when he wants to change his part—all right—others may take it. Each part brings its own results, its own pay. There is nothing to condemn, nothing to praise. It is a free choice.

That is why the *American* [magazine] becomes tedious. It gives only the favorable side of men. When we get older, we know that the wisest, the most successful men do make blunders. They rise, notwithstanding them. Their successes are greater than their failures. But no man is all success during his entire life. No saint is all saint during his entire life. No sinner is all sinner. Those who don't know this are simply ignorant of the truth of life as it is in this world. Yudhisthira, the embodiment of righteousness, slipped. Sri Krishna, God-incarnate, slipped according to human standards of ethics. Why are we so afraid to accept, to acknowledge weaknesses in ordinary human beings? We need not gloat over them. Neither need we deny and hide them. The Hindu stories of saints

are full of slips. I once asked Swami Turiyananda about this. He said, "These stories simply give the truth. The Atman alone is perfect. No use closing one's eyes. But don't be affected. No swami claims to be perfect. Many will say: 'It is only through Mother's grace that I am not worse than I am.' We are never sure of ourselves. We may fall any moment." This is wisdom, knowledge of life. But only old, tried, experienced souls know this. Why do people feel attracted to a rascal and run away from a saint? Because a rascal is true; an all-saint is a myth. If he is held up as an all-saint by his so-called friends and protectors, we know that we are being humbugged. It is namby-pamby silliness. Swamiji did not care a snap whether a person was good or bad, but he hated hidings—covering sores with flowers. And you know how Sw. Turiyananda used to wrinkle up his nose at *good* people. Jesus said, "Why callest thou me good? No one is good, but my Father who is in Heaven."

Almora, March 29, 1928

Watching Events as a Witness

[Haridas was a very simple, pious American aspirant who, like a brother, looked after Ujjvala in a little house in Los Angeles. Because Haridas was of a spiritual nature, his care and concern for Ujjvala, a cripple, had the blessings of the swamis.]

I am still at Binsar, one swami is with me. I enjoy such freedom here and the scenery and climate are excellent, so may stay another month or so. I am afraid this place has spoiled me for Almora. Still, I think it is better to go back before I get snowed in. I wish you had a pension and could spend the rest of your life here. Haridasa would also like it. But I wonder if for busy people it isn't too quiet here and lonesome. Most people, even in India, wonder how I can stick it out so long. I think it is my changed attitude towards life.

I am satisfied now to stand apart and let the world go on, watching events as a witness. Much reading helps me in this. I get the pictures of all phases of life. And I have seen enough of life to be able to appreciate what others write about it. Gopi [Gopika: Miss Brown] has been, and is, wonderfully

good to me, sending magazines and books and writing to me so regularly no matter how busy she is. How she manages to do it, I cannot understand. I can only appreciate it, and benefit by it.

Binsar, November 27, 1930

The Same "I"

And now comes your letter of May 16, with the news that you and H. [Haridas] have bought a ranch. It sounds good. There will be plenty of work with nine cows and the orchards. I love cows, but I shall never forget my experience when in Omaha, Nebraska, I had with my boss to milk seventeen creatures. I stood it for two weeks; then I quit. My hands were almost paralyzed. Work began at 3:30 A.M. and lasted till 7:30 P.M. Pumping water for the cows by hand took over one hour. But my boss was wonderfully patient with his inexperienced assistant, and he and his wife were sorry to lose me. But those were the good days when one had no trouble getting work. My next job was coachman for a German family. It seems incredible now that that was the same "I" who now is living at Almora. And this is *maya*. We mistake the ego for the Atman—–ever free, the Witness to all changes.

Almora, June 26, 1937

Bhakti Yoga

Mother's Protection

It is very beautiful just now in the Ashrama. For two weeks we have had such beautiful weather and quite warm too. It is nice to have Sadhu-Charan [Mr. Roorbach] and Mary with us again. Mother was so kind to work things as She did. She is protecting all the time; the trouble is, we do not realize it. But never mind, we will by and by. We must go within, Ujjvala, and stop our gossip and misjudgment of others. We have to give an account of ourselves, not of others. It leads only to pettiness and jealousy. But you know where all peace resides; then let us go there and drink freely, and let suspicion be with

those who want it. We want Mother, and no more nonsense, is it not so?

Shanti Ashrama, January 14, 1903

Mother's Grace

Only a few lines to thank you for your kindness to send us the lectures. Much as we enjoy them, Ujjvala, I must still ask you to please be a little careful of your health. I am so afraid you are overworking a little.

Mother is so kind to you all and to us also. It is really hard to realize what great privileges we receive. It remains with us to make the best of them.

Shanti Ashrama, February 1st, 1903

All Strength

You feel a little disheartened, but that is nothing. We all get that at times when we look at our many weaknesses. But we know that all strength is in Mother. So let us turn to Her, and all will come out well. When we take refuge in man, we will always be disappointed in the end. So just go to Mother and talk to Her, and She will tell you everything. Only be obedient to Her.

Shanti Ashrama, August 7, 1903

Mother's Will

[After Swami Turiyananda returned to India, Swami Trigunatita reached the San Francisco center as the new head on January 2, 1903.]

Yes, Ujjvala, I certainly acknowledge Mother's kind hand in inspiring you to invite me to the city. But, you know, She works in roundabout ways. We cannot always see what Her purpose is. Her means are many and various, at last to bring about Her object in view. She has given me a rather troublesome conscience and regard for duty. I cannot with a peaceful mind leave the Ashrama all alone. I have seen too much of the conditions in this valley, the last few years. You, of course, do

not know that. Had Mother sent somebody to take my place, I would have accepted right away. I have been rather desirous to see Swami [Trigunatita] again to get acquainted with his work in the city. I think it would have done me good. But I must do my duty. That is morality, the only firm basis on which spirituality can stand. That is what I meant. Do not force your own way. You have done your part, and I have done mine; now let us quickly await Mother's pleasure. Whatever that may be, will be the best all around. Of course, I would like to get rid of my pain,* but I depend on Mother. Already Mira has been so kind to take steps to help me. I will be obedient and do as I am asked to do. Does not that sound reasonable?

Shanti Ashrama, March 25, 1904

Mother's Work

You have heard all about the work here from Mira and others. They have given you such a nice account. I, myself, do not feel quite so satisfied, for I am well aware of the slips and mistakes. And that, of course, brings suffering. It is not so easy to say what is Mother's work and what is the outcome of our own selfish and uncontrolled nature. But I will not burden you with my troubles. Only, you can now understand that I cannot possibly agree with you when you say that Mother should be kind to me.

Shanti Ashrama, August 11, 1904

Our Refuge

I am sorry you went to the P.O. Sunday and did not get a letter, but please never expect a letter from me. I do not intend to do much letter writing after this. It is so useless. May we, through the grace of our Lord, learn to keep the mind directed towards Him, instead of towards all these worldly things which all end in sorrow after all—I mean, those worldly things with which we need not occupy ourselves so

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* Gurudas Maharaj was just beginning to suffer from a seemingly inexplicable "side pain."

much. I hope you will succeed in keeping a little quiet, and may you find your refuge not in persons, but in the Mother. Try to live a little with Her, instead of with people so much. Let me always know how you are getting along and be assured that you can depend on me whenever I can do anything for you.

Shanti Ashrama, August 17, 1904

Mother's Play

I'm firmly convinced that our lives are pretty nearly mapped out. What is in store for us will happen. "The Lord, brave soldier, has His home in every living heart; His magic mechanism whirls each puppet through his part." Gita. 18.61. (Ryder) I think this is the meaning of Turiyananda's "Don't plan; let Mother plan." It is a large order—I know only too well. But at least let us try not to take our planning too seriously, knowing that She, seated in our heart, is the real planner; and it is She who makes us think that we ourselves plan. This is Her mysterious play.

And now Hari Priya [Miss Mary Nelson] also has left this world. It is good that Mrs. Westerberg was with her when she died.

Almora, April 25, 1934

13

SPIRITUAL COUNSEL

Mother's Compassionate Face

I hope you will succeed in finding a suitable and agreeable position. You say "good-bye to a good time and sunshine," but I hope that the real good time and sunshine will not leave you. A good time does not depend on position or anything that brings material gain. If we are protected by Mother's compassionate face, then we live in sunshine, and then we have good times. I know that you agree with me.

Shanti Ashrama, February 20, 1902

On Attending Christian Meetings

As to joining the devotional meeting at your house, what shall I add to what I said? I, myself, would look upon it in this way. Are those who meet all sincere people? And are they studying Eastern teachings with their own? Are most of them Swami's [Turiyananda] students, and are they in sympathy with his work? Do they know about Ramakrishna, and are they not opposed to acknowledging him? With a favorable answer to these questions, I would consider that there is nothing objectionable as to place and hour of meeting. Then, of course, the question is, how are the meetings carried on? Is

there anything antagonistic or offensive to my ideas? If not, I would consult my reason. And if there is, I would not find anything against it; I would have to take into account the state of mind I am in at the time. If I am burning with devotion for Ramakrishna, if I find there all I crave for, if I live in him and walk with him, my dear Ujjvala, then I do not think that I would have much need of extra meetings in glory of Jesus. The question would almost disappear; it would not trouble me at all. But at times we are dry, cold, indolent and are badly in need of the spirit of devotion. At such times, to unite with others may be helpful, I think, even though homage is brought to an incarnation other than the one chosen by me as my Ideal.

We cannot very well separate Jesus from Ramakrishna. We must pray to Jesus, concentrate on his love and sympathy, but our own will be with us, nevertheless. It is our Lord who, once as Buddha, went through that most wonderful act of renunciation; it is our Lord who, once as Jesus, with his heart flowing over with love and compassion, wept for Jerusalem and prayed for those who nailed him on the cross. To accept Jesus in that light, to pray to him with that feeling, to do it from the heart with a free conscience and with sincere love and aspiration can bring only good, I believe. To exclude our own Master—how can we do it? But I do not think they would ask you to do that. Accepting Jesus for the time being does not mean to become disloyal to Ramakrishna. It gives such joy to see him in all. By truly accepting Jesus we can only please him. Ujjvala, how blessed we are that through the grace of our teacher we can partake of that bliss. What happiness to be able to join in with all devotees, to bow down to all images, knowing that we are all praising the same One.

Now Ujjvala, if I were in your place I think that I would be careful not to offend or give friends the idea that we cannot join in with what they do. By not going to their meeting at least once is taking a stand—not very broad, I am afraid.

You go to Dhira's [Mrs. Petersen] meditation, sacrifice much-needed rest, and imperil your health and incapacitate yourself somewhat for the next day's duties. And when there is meditation in your own house, you do not go. Of course, people notice those things, and it will prejudice them against

Vedanta. It gives the idea of forming a clique. So you see, there are many things to consider. And far be it for me to do anything but suggest. You have to follow your own conscience and be true to that.

Shanti Ashrama, October 28, 1902

The World Is Full of Woe

Never mind the tale of woe. The world is full of woe, but it always belongs to the little self, and that we want to do away with, is it not so? We create our own misery right along. It is mostly misunderstanding, and when not that, then certainly lack of discrimination and lack of love. But that is inevitable; we must stumble and get up again. Some day we will see oneness, and then we will treat woe for what it is worth.

Ujjvala, with all our little troubles, let us look at the great kindness of the Master. How tenderly he is watching over us, and caring for us. Think of the privileges and opportunities he is offering us. I feel so very thankful for his kindness. He is weaning us gradually from all that is not him and is drawing us closer to him, if only we are willing to come. And now we are willing, is it not so? We have had enough of play and little fights and nonsense. That all belongs to the little self; we now want to see the real Self in all. A little misery and a little happiness must come, but we do not want to feel disturbed by them anymore. We want to think of the Mother, and the rest will take care of itself.

Shanti Ashrama, April 6, 1903

Why Draw Comparisons?

I must have misrepresented myself very much in my previous letter, for I certainly did not intend to cause you any sorrow. The thought of "wasted effort" never entered my mind. I wanted to say that I doubted my right to take the stand of speaking to you as I did. But I see from your letter that it is all right, for you take my words as from a friend and brother. All I want to guard against is that you should hold any such ideas as that I am more spiritual, or that my words are final, or that I should be regarded as a teacher, or any such ideas. Such

ideas you should not nourish, far less express to anyone. What do we know about each other's spirituality, and why draw comparisons? We are all Mother's children, that is enough. If we hold that attitude, then we do not bring trouble on others or ourselves.

Shanti Ashrama, July 20, 1903

If We Want Peace of Mind

You seem a little displeased with me, and I can understand that very well. I have not always been very kind in my letters to you. You must forgive me. I am so impatient and irritable. It is the outcome of pride, I think, and I will ask Mother to take that away from me and make me simple again. I am not so very well, am nervous, and little upsets me. But I will try to do better and let all complicated matters alone. We want Mother, Ujjvala, and we must not forget that. It is so easy to become involved in other things and then we forget Her.

I may, through Mother's grace, soon have an opportunity to have a little talk with you, and then I will answer all your questions. There is no contradiction in what I said, only you do not see now what I mean. And as regards Dhira's remarks about me, I will also explain that to you when we meet. She is so much mistaken; it is too bad. But we all have our weaknesses. Those kinds of talks are not very nice, anyhow. They do harm all around.

To discuss the weaknesses of our fellow students is not kind, unless it should serve a purpose. If we want peace of mind, we are much better off when we keep quiet and live a little retired. It is good to study others, as well as ourselves, and the working of different minds, but when we become involved we lose clear insight and learn nothing that way. Observe and be quiet, then we learn and do not lose. Then after we get strong, we may discuss and defend others. But first we must learn how to take care of ourselves. Isn't that so?

Shanti Ashrama, March 25, 1904

How to Grow Spiritually

In regard to your question, I may not advise you, but you know it is always my belief that spirituality can only grow on a solid basis. There must be character first, and I think the only way to develop that is by doing our duty very conscientiously. You are placed in a position in life that makes it necessary for you to earn your own living. And as you have chosen to do that by starting in this business, I would think it worthwhile to make a success of it. You know the secret of work. Karma Yoga leads to freedom. We must work like men and women, and then we are channels of strength and power. And Mother will be pleased with us, and She will make us do Her work by and by. That way we become strong. And if we work for Mother, then it will not develop ego in the sense you mean, but it will do away with ego. It is not the kind of work that counts, but the way, the spirit, in which we do it. Isn't that so?

You speak so often of the necessity of gaining experience. And that is true. But what better experience can we get than that which Mother brings to us in the performance of our duty? By such experience you will benefit. Do not think that love affairs are the only experience worth having. Rather, regard them as nothing but the outcome of our passion and base desires. That belongs to the worldly man and to animals. But now we must try to know Mother, and we must carefully shun all such temptations. There is nothing grand in that—it is degrading and takes us away from God. But if you can serve Mother by doing your work well, then you will become more spiritual. Try to see Mother in all. See the Divine behind the mask of personality and then handle people as they should be handled—each one according to his trait and character. Be honest and pure and think of Mother, and then work with all your might. Only work with discretion. Do not neglect yourself or overtax yourself or overtax your strength. And take plenty of rest and good food.

Shanti Ashrama, August 14, 1904

We Dream

The past we have had; if we could only forget it. The future we cannot escape. Our mind is filled with the world in one

form or another. And the result is misery. Unless we can think of Mother and feel it, we are deluded creatures. Things go our way and we are elated, and we translate everything as spirituality. It is a farce. We dream—sometimes we know it—and still we cannot rouse ourselves. But let us plod along; no effort is lost. We bind ourselves every time. No one else is to blame. What have I got to do with other people! Still I cannot drop them.

I hope things look a little brighter for you. Yes, we had a severe rainstorm, but no damage. You need not feel sorry that I am alone; I enjoy it. I will soon have a change. It will be a change after years of solitude. How it will all turn out, who can tell! Be brave, Ujjvala, and stand firm. If others want to play, let them play. Do not allow yourself to be dragged along.

Shanti Ashrama, September 30, 1904

Be Sincere

[For years Ujjvala worked with "Mother Reynolds"; they had a stenographic service together in San Francisco.]

I can understand that Mrs. R. [Reynolds] takes life seriously. And is that then bad? For let us look in our own heart, and then let us see whether life is a play or a most serious and terrible condition! For we have to deal with ourselves. We cannot apply the exalted condition of those wonderful sages that experienced that state that life is a play to our own. For then we will become like the demon of which we read in *Raja Yoga*. To him, "Thou Art That" meant eat, drink, and make merry. So we must always try to be sincere and not apply the scriptures to attain worldly ends. And when we realize that life is a most serious matter, and when we see that duty is on us with an iron grip, then there is much hope for us; then we may soon set about in earnest to get rid of this state of affairs. But until then, we will go on, one life after the other until eternity. We are simply intellectual animals. And I need not remind you; you know all that. Now, try to apply it a little.

Shanti Ashrama, April 23, 1905

Our Destiny

Anyhow I see that we are all drifting on the current of Providence. Mother knows and She does, and we think that we have a hand in our destiny. But we may follow as slaves, or we may follow as free men. There lies the difference. And that is the only thing that matters. It is not *what* we do, but *how* we do it. There remains room for struggle. But it is the struggle for freedom, not for doing or getting this or that. It is a working inward, toward the center of our being (*nivritti*). Once we reach the center we can spit on the world. Heavens, when the dream is broken, who cares? Life is nothing but a tangle of lies anyhow, a mass of humbug. "Only he who sees the One unchanging amidst all this change—the Shining One behind the darkness—he alone lives in peace." It is true. "And if this is true, what else matters? And if it is not true, nothing matters."

Mayavati, April 10, 1917

Spiritual Babies

There will always be fools who judge a man's spiritual status by the number of cigars he smokes or the time he rises in the morning or the hours he spends in that wretched office. Such people do not realize what spiritual babies they themselves are. You know, I was brought up in a home where a pack of playing cards was looked upon as Satan metamorphosis, and the theater as the devil's playground. Afterwards, I had to bow down before India's foremost actor and playwright, one of the great devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, Girish Babu [Girish Chandra Ghosh]. Such is life and such is human wisdom. We are always criticizing from our little platform. Therefore, the best plan is not to criticize nor to be affected by the criticism of others. Let us approach spiritual teachers with love and reverence and without expectation. To that humble state of mind, the teacher may be able to bring a little help. But your critics will always go away empty and dry and disappointed. And that is what they deserve. They leave a teacher just as

wise as when they came and with, perhaps, a few inches added to the stature of their all-knowing ego.

Uttara Kashi, July 20, 1917

All That Matters

Yesterday I received your long letter of Oct. 18. I need not tell you that it made me happy. Your letters always do. And still, there is some sadness in my mind reading it. It is as if an Ujjvala, twenty years older than the Ujjvala I knew, has written it. You seem so changed, and no wonder. You have suffered much. You have matured. Perhaps, we all have. The old days are gone. But why should we look to the past? Mira would not have looked back. She would have gone ahead; she would have been brave as she always was. We must look ahead. If there is any work left for us, let us do it cheerfully. I will find everything changed when I come back. But what of that? Is that not life? Pray that I may do my duty, whatever that may be. If Mother takes me back to America, it will be with some purpose. All that matters is, are we true to Her? Everything is in Her hands. What are we but Her playmates?

Calcutta, January 24, 1918

Thy Will Be Done

[Gurudas Maharaj planned on surprising all his friends in San Francisco by taking a steamer from Calcutta to America, but a series of mishaps prevented him from doing that.]

Here I am in Mayavati again—of all places. When I left Mayavati, I had no intention whatever of coming here again. If anything, I thought I would go to southern India. Such are man's proposals. I hardly know what to write to you, how to explain it. Figuratively speaking, I had one foot on the steamer for America. It is another case of "there is many a slip between the cup and the lip." I know you all must be awfully disappointed. But, believe me, you cannot be more disappointed than I was.

At present, my mind is peaceful. What can we do when Mother desires otherwise? But I wanted to see you all so

much. Well, perhaps you are to come here. Let us see. Or the war may end, and all may be well after all. The mystery of it is why I had to go to all that trouble and expense. There is a lesson in everything, if only we can see it. Are we trusting too much in ourselves? Do we need greater faith and surrender to Mother? Perhaps so. Perhaps, "Thy will be done" is not stamped deeply enough on our hearts. Well, Ujjie, let us be brave. Think of what nice plans I had for our dear Mira.* But is it not, perhaps, better as it is now? Is she not, perhaps, happier now and nearer to our Lord? But I did want to see you so much. And I had hoped so much to see the Shanti Ashrama this time. But it is always so in life. Why? Why? That is the eternal question. Why must things go so differently from what we think best? It is our limited vision—judging God from our standpoint. We have to go beyond this world and leave the "Why?" to Him. "Pleasure and pain regard alike!" How difficult. But it is the goal. Do not be disgusted with me, Dear. Pray for me as I pray for you all. The plan may yet stand revealed. Patience and faith in Mother is a hard lesson to learn. Perhaps blows are necessary. Where the whole world is suffering, are we not fortunate after all? Has not Mother been wonderfully kind to us after all? May we only remember Her.

Mayavati, June 17, 1918

Miracles Are Possible

[Aimee Semple McPherson, Pentacostal evangelist, was a popular healer of the 1920s who, at the peak of her career, went for a swim in the Pacific Ocean and mysteriously disappeared—only to reappear thirty-six days later in a Mexican border town. There was enough evidence connected with this event for McPherson to be charged with "conspiracy to commit acts injurious to public morals," though the case was eventually dropped. Meanwhile, the charismatic McPherson attracted many people like Ujjvala, a cripple, who, perhaps out of curiosity, attended her meetings in

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* Mira, who had been one of the members at the Shanti Ashrama during Swami Turiyananda's time, passed away suddenly in May or June, 1916. (See chapter 21, "Consolations.")

the hopes of some kind of miracle-healing, health cure, or inspiration.]

I believe with you that miracles are possible. I don't believe that we can lengthen the span of our lives. But within that span, all things are possible. Of course, in all things our final attitude must be "Thy will be done." But I have been thinking for the last few days, "May it not be that there was a meaning in Ujjie's going so much to Mrs. McPherson, Mr. Wiggleworth, and the Pentacostal meetings? Was she not led to go there for a great and special purpose? Was it, perhaps, that in her also a great miracle of healing was to be demonstrated—not necessarily through these particular instruments, but in a marvelous way of her own?" I believe in the possibility of an absolute cure. Can it be that a demonstration of this in your own life, in your own being, is just what you need for further spiritual progress? May it not be that this would bring you a freedom of soul, a faith, a spiritual enlargement that you might not get without it in this life? May it not be an experience of which spiritually you stand in need? Mother's ways are inscrutable. Her ways are different with every one of Her children.

Our Lord, Sri Ramakrishna, performed miracles (healing included). May it, perhaps, be his wish to perform a miracle through you? May it, perhaps, be that in you, he wants to show his omnipotent power even on the material plane? He did it in Tota Puri's case when the Ganges suddenly did not seem to contain water enough to drown him in. He did it when a plant bearing red blossoms suddenly produced white flowers.* He did it on other occasions. And the effect in all cases was a stronger faith, a new spiritual vista. I believe that he can cure you, make you absolutely whole, if you approach him in the right spirit of faith and love and trust. And if he does cure, I believe it will be for your spiritual well-being.

I am not thinking of only removing the pain, but of a total cure—the missing bone replaced, no more necessity for a raised shoe, and an x-ray photo showing an absolutely normal

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* These miracles are mentioned in *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*, by Swami Saradananda.

hip. I don't suggest this in a "happy-ever-after" spirit. It impresses me as a needed incident in your religious life and as a help, perhaps, in the religious life of others. A great faith like Mira's would have been a support to you. But Haridas can supply that. And I am sure your own faith is sufficient. You have my prayers. This you know.

Almora, June 30, 1925

Another Constellation

[The Lord's Farm was a Christian commune, about twenty-five miles outside New York City. On its twenty-five acres there lived three or four men (one of whom brought his sister), sharing an austere life wedded to Christ, without normal conveniences and comforts such as newspapers, tea, coffee, or organizational trademarks such as classes or formal rules. Even during their heaviest work of gathering fruit, vegetables and hay, they were expected to commune with "the Voice of God."]

You understand, I don't condemn the Pentacostals. They are doing a wonderful work that I could not do. But we belong to another constellation; we have another sun to illumine us. Our orbit is free from smut. It is always towards greater purity. First reach the sun, and then, whatever Mother wills. Association with our own class, with those belonging to the same sun, is a great help. We are swept along in the current. We may quarrel and fight, but, anyhow, we are within the constellation—we keep within the mainstream. That is why I had to leave the Lord's Farm; that is why I am taken to India, and now from Swami Turiyananda's Shanti Ashrama to his Indian ashrama. And see the miracle! In America, the Shanti Ashrama suited me best, and in India this ashrama. Does it not look as if Swami Turiyananda had something to do with it? Is it accident that brought me to India for the third time? No! I could not be satisfied with anything but the very best. I could not swallow molasses after having tasted nectar.

Almora, October 13, 1925

What Is Morality?

Now we have a monkey question here, as you will see from *Young India*. All these questions are impossible to discuss from a moral standpoint. What is morality? It constantly changes. It is all a question of individual sentiment and conscience. Gandhi has a hard time of it. I feel about his calf-killing as I did in Shanti Ashrama about the rattlesnake. When Swami Turiyananda asked me, I told him that I would not kill it; but if others wanted to kill it, let them do so. You remember—the creature was carried away and then came back and was carried away again, never to return. But you cannot carry off a few hundred monkeys. Public opinion here is so strong against killing that I don't think Gandhi will take that measure, though he will surely do it if he is convinced of the rightness of the act. Did Sarah [Fox] show you her pictures of the monkeys at Kankhal? They used to come into their room and jump suddenly on the table and snatch the bread away. They had to be on the watch all the time.

Almora, November 6, 1928

On Karma

This is a good day to send you a few lines, to remember how much Swamiji means to all of us and to you especially who have met him at close quarters! What greater blessing could have entered our life? It will land us safely at the other shore of this ocean of *samsara* [cycle of birth and rebirth] whether we realize it now or not. As to good or bad *karma*, what to say? Whatever brings us closer to God is good *karma*, even if it may cause us suffering in the body. So I hope and know that your bad fortune is bad only on the surface, holding the germ of good. The office people are awfully kind to you. But a little rest at home would have been so welcome to you under the circumstances.

Almora, Swamiji's Birthday
January 30, 1932

On Titiksha

I am horrified reading Miss Kennedy's letter telling Gopika about your accident. I felt as if every muscle in my body contracted when I read that letter. It happened about six weeks ago. And I hope the worst is over when you get this letter. But the discomfort will last a long time. Do you remember Turiyananda speaking often of "*titiksha*" (patient suffering of pain)? I know you have a wonderful amount of that. May Sri Ramakrishna keep your mind in peace under all this misfortune. How true it is that as we think, so we are.

Almora, June 1, 1936

No Greater Blessing

I am simply overwhelmed and I don't know what to say. First of all with your and Haridas's generosity in the midst of your misfortune, and secondly with the ranch calamity. I had not heard from you for ever and ever so long, and now I see from your letter that you have not received my letters.

Well, your letter with the check (dated 7 Aug.) arrived today. And today is the first day of Durga Puja which is to the Bengalis, what Christmas is to us: a day of giving presents and greetings. That is auspicious. I am giving a little offering to Mother Durga for you both, and I pray that She may grant you both peace of mind. It is our mental reaction that counts under all circumstances. It all seems too dreadful and I know how you must feel. Such a total loss, and years of labor and worry. "The Lord takes away the wealth of those whom He loves" (Srimad Bhagavatam).

> Once Sri Krishna and Arjuna went to beg their food at a wealthy man's home, but the man turned them away. As they left, Sri Krishna said to the man, "I bless you with a long life, wealth, and children. You will live long to enjoy this world." Next they went to a poor man's house. The man received them with great humility and devotion and fed them to the best of his ability. When they had had their meal, Sri Krishna said to the man, "Your only child will die." Arjuna was horror-struck and said, "My Lord, how could you pronounce such a terrible curse on this

good man while you blessed the rascal who refused us food?" Then Sri Krishna spoke the above quotation and said, "This poor man is my devotee, and I love my devotees. But part of his mind is still attached to his only son. When the son dies he will give his whole mind to me. And that will be his greatest blessing. There is no greater blessing than that."

Dehra Dun, October 7, 1940

14

OBSTACLES IN SPIRITUAL LIFE

A Good Test

The other day I read an article in an Indian magazine. It dealt with the Upanishads. There was nothing new in the article, but it brought out one point that I liked. Of course, we have heard it hundreds of times, but it seemed to "soak in," as Mira used to say. It is this: that God is *anandam*. We usually find it translated as bliss. But the author called it joy. God is joy. And so the religious life, if it means coming closer to God, is a most joyful life. We find in meditation, if we are a little successful, that it fills us with joy. So here, I think, is a good test by which to judge our spiritual condition. The more spiritual we become, the more joyful will we be. And when we are miserable, it is a sign that we have wandered away from God. When the swamis in their youth lived with Ramakrishna, their life was so joyful, because they were with God, the embodiment of joy. How happy we were with Swami Turiyananda, because he was filled with the spirit of the Divine Mother.

Everywhere that joy is present; it lies at the base of all existence. The universe is an expression of God's joy. The flower tries to express it; man, beast—all manifestation is an attempt to express that inner joy. In life, in death, in happiness, in pain—deep underneath, that joy is at work. The sages

perceive that, and, therefore, they are so happy under all conditions. They do not care for good and evil; they see *anandam* everywhere.

It is remarkable how in India cheerfulness is considered a most necessary condition of the mind for spiritual progress. It was no ordinary accomplishment in Mira that she could laugh under all conditions—even at her own misery. And her abandon was not recklessness—it was freedom. Grandma also felt joy in her religion. That is what made her so sweet and peaceful.

Let us think of R.K. [Sri Ramakrishna] as joy. We are his children. We have nothing to fear, for he is all joy. And where there is joy, there is no malice, no littleness; there is only sweetness and freedom. Joyful people are always easy to approach, and they radiate happiness.

Mayavati, October 22, 1916

The Nature of Maya

[The mental disturbance to which Gurudas Maharaj referred concerned the harsh judgment against Mira's character, made after her demise by a fellow ashramite (see chapter 21, "Consolations").]

All my mental disturbance was due to S.N.'s [Satya-Nishta, or Mr. Francis Rhodehamel] letter. But I pray of you not to discuss these matters with him or anyone else. It is all over now.

I came across a very simple little prayer. It is from the Rig Veda. It is so simple and sweet. It has given me some consolation. "As cows take delight in green pastures, as man takes delight in his own sweet home, so, O blissful Lord, do Thou take delight to dwell in our pure hearts." If you like the prayer, sit down quietly sometimes and repeat it. If He dwells in our hearts, then everything will be righted. All our foolish misgivings will disappear, and faith will return.

How strong is *maya* and how weak we are. We are so easily overcome. But it need not be so. Let us only try to be close to the Mother's heart. *Maya* is so incomprehensible. We have to be on our guard all the time. Once Sri Ramakrishna prayed to

the Divine Mother to show him the nature of *maya*. He was seated in the Dakshineswar garden, under the tree known as the Panchavati. While he was thus praying, he saw a beautiful woman coming from the Ganges. As she came nearer, he saw that she was pregnant. And when she was quite close to him, she gave birth to a lovely baby. She took the baby in her arms and nursed it. Then after a little while, her appearance changed. She became terrible to look upon. She took the child and began to devour it. And in this act she returned and disappeared in the Ganges. That is *maya* personified—so lovable on the one hand, so terrible on the other. This is our Mother—the most blissful and the most terrible. She builds up and She breaks down. She gives us both sweet and bitter fruits. She soothes our heart and She tears it to pieces.

But when we understand, we will know that it is all bliss. Swamiji brings it out so clearly in his poem: "Who can misery love, dance in destruction's dance, to him the Mother comes" ["Kali the Mother"]. Don't you see that all this misery has its grand side? It delivers Mira from the bondage of this miserable life, it opens our eyes, it wakes us from our dream.

I am sure that on the battlefields in Europe, soldiers have received visions of the unreality of life and an insight into the reality of the spirit that they might not have received through many lives under ordinary conditions [See chapter 15 on "Spiritual Experiences."] Shiva the Destroyer also destroys the delusion of man. Through terrible experiences the veil is blown aside for a moment.

We must try to live in the presence of Ramakrishna even now. How often I told Mira: "Mira, our association must have its justification in the Lord. In Him we must meet and be united." Let us remember that, Ujjie. Then friendship is sweet and pure and holy and helpful, as it was in our case. So, in that same sense, that friendship with Mira must continue. And if we succeed, I believe, it will even be strengthened. We live for a high purpose. We must not lower the banner.

Let me know sometimes how you are feeling. You must be lonely sometimes. But be brave. Perhaps we will meet again. Who knows where and when? But you are always in my mind. I am tired of planning. Let Mother have free play. Let us be like the dry leaf blown by the wind. Mother alone knows what

is really best for us. She will make everything all right if we have a little faith in Her.

Mayavati, October 22, 1916

Attachment

I get so awfully attached to certain things. Once it happened here that one of our goats was taken by a tiger. She left a tiny baby behind. Not having any goat's milk, I tried to feed it cow's milk. But it did not agree with the little thing. Then I searched for tender leaves. It would eat the leaves one day, but the next day I had to search for some other plant. It kept me quite busy. The little baby became attached to me and I, to it. It followed me everywhere. But it became weaker and weaker, and finally it died. My heart was broken. When I went for a walk, all the tender plants would remind me of my baby. I thought, Oh, perhaps it would have liked these leaves, or these. And then it flashed in my mind, how strong is *maya*. What must not a mother suffer when she loses a baby?

When I went to the Lord's Farm, Swami Turiyananda's last words to me were: "Pleasure and pain regard alike." That is freedom. But unless our mind is anchored to the Lord, it is impossible. So we know the secret. The path is clear enough. Now it is for us to follow it. Let us try, Ujjie. We are fortunate to have found our *Ishta*, our Chosen Ideal. So for us it ought to be a little easier. Ramakrishna is our Atman, our soul and life. The closer we come to Him, the closer we come to our real Self. In Him we must lose our little individuality. There is no other way for us. And it is a sweet and easy way after all, if we only try now and then. But we forget so often, don't we?

Mayavati, October 22, 1916

Driven by the Whip

[Mason was one of the inhabitants of the Lord's Farm in New York.]

I often think of Mason's saying: "I have lost my reputation anyhow, so now I am free and can do as I please." But we ordinary creatures are driven by the whip: what will people

say?; what will people think?; would Swami like it? Mason's only motive power was love. He knew no duty. Love ruled his life. He had no ax to grind, no favors to court, nobody to "please." He did things because he loved to do them. Isn't that freedom? And he was willing to take what came, and he was not afraid of blows. There was no "I ought to do this or that"; it was "I love to do this, so I do it." He loved to help people so he helped them irrespective of his own comfort or happiness in a material way. He gave all that he had, not because he ought to give something, but because it pleased him. That is why I loved and admired him. He had a big heart and a free spirit. And there was never the idea that he was making a martyr of himself.

Almora, September 26, 1924

Samskaras

I was very glad to get the Aimee papers [reference to Aimee Semple McPherson]. Let me hear if ever the mystery should be solved, which I don't think it ever will. I am inclined to think that Aimee is innocent, but human nature is human nature—that is, full of surprises even to ourselves. Past *samskaras* sometimes force us to do things even against our better judgment. You remember what Sw. Turiyananda used to say: "We are never safe; we never know what we may do, no matter how evil, as long as we have a body." The Indian epics are full of stories to that effect—saints slipping. So in India they don't think it so terrible. They say, "It is human, it is the effect of past *karma*. Anyone may have a slip." And personally, I don't take things seriously anymore. Today you slip, I may slip tomorrow. What of that? We pay the price, that is all. So I cannot have any condemnation for anyone. That is also the Indian attitude. Judge not. After all, it is 99% fear that keeps us straight—"the policeman," as Swamiji calls it—fear of punishment here or hereafter, fear of discovery, fear of society. "Why do ye call me good?" Jesus said. "No one is good but the Father in Heaven." We are all mean at heart. To be good is a constant effort. And we are really good only in *samadhi* or in some state of religious *bhava*, or religious mood.

Almora, October 11, 1926

How Powerful Maya Is!

Yes, life is terrible. And as human nature as a whole doesn't seem to change, it always will be so. How powerful *maya* is! Even though we know better, we are caught all the time. "I know what is right, still I don't do it. I know what is wrong, still I do it. O Lord, seated in the heart, may I do Thy command." As you write, stupidity and selfishness are the cause of what seems unnecessary suffering to ourselves and others.

Binsar, October 21, 1930

Success and Failure

Now let us see what will happen with the ranch.* What is to happen will happen, of course, but though we know this, we cannot help worrying when things go against us. It would be grand if by selling, you get your money back and your anxiety would be over. Then you can take a clipper across the Atlantic and in nine days be in Almora, and live in peace forever after.

Anyhow, we know that all is Mother's will. We cannot change that. She makes us do whatever we do, right or wrong, wise or unwise. In reality there is nothing to regret. But we have to know that we are only the Witness to this world-play—to actually feel that, that success and failure belong to the mind, not to the Atman.

Almora, June 17, 1939

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* In addition to their house near the Vedanta temple, in Los Angeles, Ujjvala and Haridas bought a ranch in southern California in the late 1930s, on which they had a lemon grove that brought in a small income.

15

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES

A General Experience

Yes, the meditation lesson is good, practical, and suggestive. The swami [Swami Trigunatita] must certainly be helpful to many. I think it is a general experience that flashes of light come to the student when, and in a way, least expected. It is that which makes me hold to the attitude that everything comes from the Mother, and we in ourselves can do nothing. But, of course, we have to try anyhow and work really hard, otherwise no knowledge will come. It is the same way with places and environments. I think it is in this, as in all things, the expectation that is the real barrier. We are told not to be anxious, but to be of a quiet, cheerful mind. The mistake with many of us is that we are all the time expecting wonderful things, and we are so anxious for progress, that we think too much of ourselves. The mind is not peaceful, but impatient and worried. How many obstacles and pitfalls—isn't it so? But never mind that. We must try and make the means themselves an object of pleasure and enjoyment. Then let progress and all that take care of itself. Mother will look out for that, sure enough. And She will carry us over all pitfalls and obstacles; only we must trust in Her and be fearless. You know, to cross a dangerous spot, we must not look at it, otherwise we

go down. Fear is awfully bad, and so again is recklessness. But I must stop—you get serious enough!

No, I have not felt lonely. Mother has been kind in that respect. I have been quite busy with one thing and another, and I try to study and meditate.

Shanti Ashrama, April 16, 1903

"Never Forget It"

[Ramakrishna Mission swamis are not inclined to divulge their personal spiritual experiences, and Gurudas Maharaj was no exception. However, from this collection of Gurudas Maharaj's 275 letters—largely written to Ujjvala—this one letter extract was a private and moving exception. It was written to Gopika (Charlotte Brown), a close fellow ashramite, by Gurudas Maharaj on his sixty-first birthday. Without fanfare, Gurudas Maharaj divulged a profound side of himself, and, in so doing, he gave beautiful counsel that may be of use to other struggling spiritual aspirants.]

It is a strange thing how sometimes doubt comes about religion being true. It is one of the things I have wondered at in Ramakrishna's life. After all those marvelous experiences he had had, actually seeing and talking with the Mother, a wave of doubt would come over his mind: Is this true or is it madness?

I know I have had these doubts. I seemed to come to myself as awakening from a dream, and I wondered if I had not been living in an imaginary world, a world created by auto-suggestion. Then I remembered Swamiji's saying: "We are all hypnotized, we must dehypnotize ourselves." I think this is a wonderful way of stating it. So absolutely true. Or as Shankaracharya puts it: The universe is only a superimposition, and naked Truth remains.

Another thing I have noticed: we forget the experience (spiritual) we have had and gradually begin to doubt again. Sw. Turiyan. once said to me after I had told him some of my experiences, "Never forget it." The reason we forget, or almost forget, is that we don't live what we experience.

I remember once I saw, or experienced, or what you may call realized beyond a doubt, that we are all Atman, souls, and our earthly individualities are only like reflections of the souls. And with it came the knowledge that this life is unreal, and what fools we are to take it seriously—to hate, and to be jealous and quarrel, and all that. I saw it as absolute lunacy, for in reality we are all equal—Spirit, blissful, beyond love and hatred, all equally free, perfect, beyond all desires.

Think of what a heaven life would be for me if I could have retained that consciousness. There would have been only love, love for all and everything, for all life is only a reflection of our blissful Self—the reflection distorted by our ignorant mind. No good, no bad—life is only a shadow-play to enjoy if we realize it as such.

I am the soul, immortal; life, my own shadow on this world of *maya*. This is Truth, for I have experienced it also in other forms. And this is really my religion, the one thing in religion of which I am certain. And I also know that one can have the consciousness of the presence of Ramakrishna, and can even (spiritually) see him, though that vision may not necessarily be a human form. It may be a light, an ocean of ether, or what-not. But we know that it is Ramakrishna, and it fills us with ecstasy. But old, established mental habits drag us down again to become once more ordinary, deluded human beings.

I have known moments that you might have cut my body to pieces, and I would have laughed while it was going on. I would have been the Witness, detached from the body, enjoying the fun. And now when I have a toothache or a headache I am undone. This world has become real again. Still I know that this world-reality is relative, while the spirit-reality is absolute.

Religion means only the attempt to attain the spirit-consciousness and to retain it. All else in religion is 90 percent bunk, or as Swamiji says "lower truth," for whatever we believe in is truth for the one who really believes it. Whatever we are conscious of is true to us.

So it is a question of raising our consciousness towards ultimate Truth. And every step upwards gives us a less distorted vision of the Truth of God. The Himalayas from a distance look like one unbroken range of mountains. As we come

nearer we see that there are many ranges and isolated mountains. But in both cases we saw the Himalayas. The quarrel begins when I say, "It is one continuous range," and you say, "No, there are many detached ranges." And that is what religion now means: quarreling over details.

I hate the word religious, because it has lost its original meaning. So with God. The God I was taught to believe in was a devil. A cruel tyrant. But the God of the Christian mystics is the same as the God of Vedanta—Purusha, Brahman, or Atman. But the Church doesn't teach this God. At least it did not when I was a youth. My pious parents, Lord bless them, made me hate religion. Children should not be taught religion anyhow. They will find out what they want to know. And that is time enough. Religion and morals stuffed down a child's throat often spoil the child for life. No one should be told more than what he asks for. And if you answer, tell the truth.

Almora, February 7, 1931
(my 61st birthday)

The Story of a German Soldier

["Mr. Ady," to whom Gurudas Maharaj referred, was a German soldier who was critically wounded during World War I. One day as he lay dying in the hospital, Adi had a vision of a strange person with a benign face who sat on his bed and placed his hand over his head and body. This vision continued for a couple of days. Adi was then mysteriously cured. After his release from the hospital, Adi was haunted by the memory of that strange person till 1934, when he came to New York and happened to see in a book a photo of Sri Ramakrishna. Upon learning that some of Sri Ramakrishna's disciples were still living, Adi travelled to India and met Swami Akhandananda, who was then the president of the Ramakrishna Order. Adi received initiation and later brahmacharya *from Swami Akhandananda, whom he served till the swami's passing. At that time, Br. Adi Chaitanya received permission from the authorities of Belur Math to practice* sadhana *in the Himalayas. After leaving Belur Math, no one ever heard from him again. In any case, the following extract already shows that Adi Chaitanya possessed a restless nature.]*

Mr. Ady is coming back in October. You remember—he is the one who has had such strange experiences in his youth. Let us see how it turns out. But it is different for active natures. One becomes restless or settles down and goes to seed. It is not easy to keep the mind occupied in the right direction—to turn the mind inward, to dive into the depths of one's own being. The rest is all play, and we love to play.

Almora, August 27, 1935

Ujjvala's Dream

And another nice dream you had. You are fortunate. (About Sw. Abhedan[anda]). I just read the same idea in the *Yoga Vasishtha*: we make our own future by deeds and thoughts till we get free.

Kankhal, December 3, 1939

Never Mind Visions

Ujjie, never mind visions or experiences. Sw. Turiyananda told us again and again, "You *are* Mother's children, whether you know it or not. She has accepted you; you have been bitten by the cobra. The poison has entered your blood. No getting away from Her." Let that assurance be enough for us. Now let the Mother give or withhold Her visions. We are Hers forever. On that we stand, that is our faith. That faith will make us free.

Barlowganj, April 15, 1949

16

PRACTICAL ADVICE

When One Is Sick

Was sorry to hear that you are suffering from stomach trouble. That is really too bad. Are you careful with your food? I hope you are not overworking. Would it not be better for you to come here for a while? Try to keep quiet, Ujjvala. Do not rush to different places. You are not weak, nonsense. But everyone feels that way when one is sick. When we are not strong physically, we must, of course, be careful.

Shanti Ashrama, Sept. 14, 1902

I hope you will feel better by this time and hope that the water cure will prove beneficial. Mr. Millets is a physician, I believe, so he knows what he is about. Never mind everybody's comments. We must be true to ourselves, that is all. If we try to please every Tom, Dick and Harry, we never get anywhere. As you rightly remark, no matter what you do, you will be criticized.

Shanti Ashrama, Sept. 29, 1902

[In his pre-monastic life, Gurudas Maharaj fell off a horse and broke his back. For the rest of his life he was forced to wear a back brace, about which he wrote to console Ujjvala (a cripple) in a letter dated June 22, 1925: "And the worst of it is that I have always to take an extra one along wherever I go. It fills up half of my little trunk. But in the places where I live, even the smallest repairs of that kind cannot be made. So I have to keep the extra one always with me."]

No, my trouble is not any better, but that is all right. If only my mind may be on Mother, then I have nothing to fear.

Shanti Ashrama, April 23, 1905

I am sorry to learn you are not improving much. I know what a nuisance it is not to be able to get around as one would like to. But if it helps you to remember Mother, it has, at least, one good side to it. You know, Madame Guyon prayed for suffering, as it always brought her closer to God.

Benares, November 23, 1925

On Duty

I was glad to hear that it goes so well in the office. Yes, let us do our duty fully, and Mother will see to the rest. I hope you have succeeded in engaging a suitable room to live. Try to make it a little attractive and comfortable, then you will be more liable to stay in the room and quiet down a little.

Shanti Ashrama, July 20, 1903

How to Be Happy at Home

[Before Mira passed away in 1916, she became unsettled in her family life.]

I also do not quite agree with you when you say that Mira cannot be happy at home. I know, of course, how you mean it, but do not forget, dear Ujjvala, that our Lord *can* and, I pray, *will* make her happy in her home. If through the grace of the Lord, her eyes may be opened and she may see Divinity in

herself, she will then also see it in her husband and son, and be sure that then the question is settled, and she will not look for happiness elsewhere. She has a duty in life, and, by performing that duty conscientiously, she will find liberation, and she will laugh at all your so-called pleasures and happiness. And you do the same, Ujjvala. Do not run after personalities, but go within. The Divine Mother is waiting for you; let Her in, and give up all folly.

Shanti Ashrama, August 11, 1904

On Business

[Ujjvala's business was evidently her stenographic service, in San Francisco, with "Mother Reynolds."]

One's own business means worry and anxiety, but if you cannot succeed in securing a desirable position, then you are forced to do something else; and as you have now started with this business, I would certainly advise you to make a success of it and make all the money you can. Do business in a businesslike way—no namby-pamby—and then be careful about the expenditure of your money. And do not overwork. No more work after office hours, but have some agreeable recreation. I think, if once you succeed in that, you will feel like a different person—strong and not so dependent—and it will bring you closer to Mother than all this talk and running after so-called spirituality. Don't you believe so yourself? What does Trigunatita say about it?

Shanti Ashrama, August 17, 1904

What you write about your study of shorthand seems so much more practical, and I fully understand that you would like to excel in something. It affords such a pleasure in life and makes one strong and confident.

Mayavati, June 28, 1911

Stay Outside All Controversy

Strange things happen in this strange world of ours. But as it is all *maya*, we must expect this, and if we look at it in the right spirit, it must amuse us and, perchance, teach us the one truth worth remembering—that we are the Atman, touched by nought that goes on in the dream. There is one thing that one must admire in Mrs. Lartigau and that is her sincerity and strength of character to do what she thinks right. But her vision, I think, is limited, that is, if she has cut off all connection with Vedanta. In India I have learned to look at things from a different angle. There are so many ways of looking at things; and if Abhedananda is what she always claimed, I do not see why his extravagance should cause her to give him up altogether. But, to be true to one's self and to one's convictions is certainly a step on the way. We all have to go by steps. I prefer to stay outside all controversy, that is why I do not go to people if I can possibly help it. Musing over things does not do any good. Let everyone follow his own convictions.

The Hindu Temple
2963 Webster Street
San Francisco, CA.
October 29, 1919

On Spiritualism

Who knows what this spiritualism really is? I have my own theory about it, but it may be all wrong. I believe that it is the mysterious power of reading the subconscious mind and conscious mind. You will say, "But they tell things we never thought of." I believe, however, that we think many things without being aware of them, or at least, without their leaving an impression that is lasting. In the street we daily meet hundreds of persons. We see them, but we could not recognize them if we saw them again. Of one thing I am sure, we do not know all that is going on in our own minds. Furthermore, I believe that even these subconscious thoughts greatly shape our future. I believe that if we think unconsciously that what we do not verbalize will turn out against our wish, it may very often actually do so. Perhaps, many of our diseases have their

origin in the subconscious. Then we think that we think a certain thing when we do not think it at all. For example, many people think they don't believe in spooks. But actually they do believe in them. The mind is complicated to be sure! You remember, Swamiji said somewhere that during meditation often wicked thoughts come to the surface that we would have thought impossible to have. And is it not so in dream also? And Sri Ramakrishna, from seeing a person's subconscious mind, knew what his possibilities were for this life.

Anyhow, I don't believe that anything is bad. Things simply work out according to the laws of being. Everything is coiled up within ourselves, and now it is uncoiling. In other words, everything has to be as it is. All we can do is try to remember Mother in fortune and misfortune and be resigned to Her will. It is She who is manifesting through us. She is at the heart of things.

Almora, April 5, 1925

On Psychic Readings

At the risk of boring you, I must say a few words more about this interesting and harmless game [Mrs. Kahlert's handwriting analysis]. You must always remember that handwriting, palmistry, etc., are true indications. But our knowledge of it is limited, so we are bound to make mistakes. On the other hand, we must be charitable in judging the readings, for we are seldom what others think us to be. We all live hiding ourselves behind a mask. These readings, if correct, give the person, not the mask. Again, it reveals tendencies which we may have or are trying to conquer. The handwriting, like the lines in the palm, may not change as quickly as we change or correct our faults. A palmist once came to Socrates. The reading was far from flattering, so his disciples abused the reader. Then Socrates said, "Hold on! This man is right. All these qualities are in my nature, only I have them under my control."

Of course, to make a living at such things one has to remember the Sanskrit saying: "Say what is true but not what is unpleasant. Say what is pleasant but not what is untrue"—a good policy at all times. I think both Gopi and myself would

benefit by observing it. I, at least, say things which would be better unsaid to keep up friendship. I say them carelessly because I mean no harm. They carry no poison. But if these things were said to me, I would, perhaps, also resent them. We judge the words and not the spirit, the feeling behind them. I make the mistake of thinking that friends know me well enough to see through the remark. The very idea of maliciousness is so far removed from my mind that it never occurs to me that friends can take offense at me.

Then the readings are written so cleverly. The style has a mysteriousness, as if a spook were talking. That, I think, accounts for much of the success. They are artistic; they are tactful; they are interesting. And it is all fun. We have to pay for our fun. If I could give a little fun to people for one dollar, I would not feel that I was cheating them.

If only we could look upon all life as fun instead of taking things so seriously. "Meet life merrily," says Nivedita, "and know that it is all the Mother's play." There is the secret! Mother laughs because She is not attached. We weep because we are attached. Mother is the Witness. She involves Herself and evolves again. And She thinks it is great fun. We involve and entangle ourselves, and then we weep and moan and indulge in self-pity during the process of evolving and disentangling. "Know the Atman and be free," and then play at anything you like. That is what life should be. And then all life becomes beautiful. It is only a question of the angle of vision. With the right vision there is no evil, no ugliness, no sadness. It is all part of a wonderful drama or dream.

Almora, Sept. 5, 1925

Psychic Versus Spiritual

Mrs. K. puts a lot into the word "psychic"—more than the word will convey to the run of people. And we Vedantists make a sharp distinction between psychic and spiritual. The two may go together, but not necessarily. A fortune teller is psychic; so is a medium—one who sees and hears from a subtle plane, etc., all so-called supernatural experiences of a sense nature—seeing, hearing, smelling, etc. Spirituality is feeling (not touch), realizing a greater freedom of being, a

lifting of soul into higher realms of existence, always ennobling, raising the character, beautifying life, feeling one's eternal divine nature, becoming that. It always elevates, goes beyond the sense-plane, forgetting the world, the body, the ego—a transformation, a growth of consciousness. I believe many artists, poets, musicians have these moods. The soul seems to expand—a blissful experience. That is, of course, the higher meaning, not the spirituality of ordinary literature. The artist sees, hears, feels something beyond what the senses register. Therefore, there is the struggle to express it on the sense-plane, the difficulty. "There mind cannot reach, words cannot express it." No really inspirational mood can find satisfaction in expression. It always falls short of the thing realized. That existence is different from *this* existence. It cannot be fully reproduced on the world-plane. We can realize it, but cannot communicate it to others because we cannot express the "feeling" that goes with it.

Benares, January 1, 1926

17

LITERARY REVIEWS

Toward Democracy, Kali the Mother, The Cure d'Ars

To *T. P's* [*Weekly*] I owe my acquaintance with Ed Carpenter's *Toward Democracy* which I am at present going through. The swami from Mayavati kindly lent me the book. It is an acquaintance worth cultivating. He reminds me of our own Walt Whitman, and it is clear that Nivedita has read him; her style is so like his. Some passages in *Kali the Mother* are almost identical with Carpenter's, and certainly the ideas are all there. Of course, *Kali the Mother* is entirely Swamiji's, put in that particular style by Nivedita.

I am reading with it a book sent to me by Gopika and recommended by Mira—*The Cure d'Ars*. The one is a song of freedom, the other of resignation—two phases of one experience; one realization expressed by two vastly different mediums—the one, expansion of the little into the great Self; the other, death of the little and birth of the great Self.

It is such a delight to read good books, especially when one lives in solitude and is thrown on one's self so much, for here I mix very little with anyone.

Kankhal, December 5, 1910

Keyserling's Travel Diary

Glory be! Keyserling's *Travel Diary* has arrived—two beautifully bound and printed volumes, gold-top edges, about 800 pages. It is a trip around the world. Of the nine parts, part three (243 pages) is devoted to India. But I cannot read much at a time (it tires my brain). It is like a rich dinner of many entrees—a bite of this and a bite of that is all we can manage. I am not now reading it critically, just lingering a little at a dish of especially good taste. "Man always experiences joy when someone else makes clear to him his own experiences." That is what the author does for me. Here I meet for almost the first time many of my own thoughts more beautifully expressed.

But remember, we have to do with a philosopher, not with a world-trotter. His is the kind of mind that expands by a world tour, whereas, I dare say, ninety-nine percent of world travellers come home as they started out—without having really gained anything worthwhile. We can appreciate only that for which we are prepared mentally. The rest passes us by without nourishing our mind.

That is why so few people gain anything by visiting other countries. They read in guidebooks what they ought to appreciate, and they imagine that they do appreciate it, and they tell all about it when they return home. But there is no individual observation or independent cogitation. They repeat what the guidebooks tell. Keyserling is not of that stamp. He is an active, observing, cogitating mind. In Ceylon, not only his mind, but even his body becomes "buddhified." "I am sure that if I fell ill, I would have to imbibe other healing drafts than I would at home." Isn't that slick? Some of his observations are startling and one may not agree. But it is good reading.

Almora, April 9, 1926

Panchatantra

Your *Panchatantra* (of which you wrote) is very clever, indeed, and wonderfully done by Professor Ryder. But I don't care much for it. I have read so many Hindu books with philosophizing, moralizing animals that I am satisfied with it. Now I prefer nature stories, the accounts of woodsmen and

scientists like W. Beebe, who study animals in their natural elements and tell something new about them.

I used to like the *Aesop's Fables* too. But I have had enough of it now. Simply different moods and tastes at different times. Some people are surprised when I do not care for some food I happened to like ten years ago, or when I hold a different opinion on subjects from what I held twenty years ago. I confess, it may be a little disconcerting to friends, but I cannot help it. I do change with the years—for better or for worse, God knows. But I would almost say, "Better for the worse than to stand still and vegetate." I can understand what Swamiji meant when he said, "Better be sincere than a goody-goody."

Almora, April 9, 1926

Mukherji's Book

[Mukherji's book refers to The Face of Silence, *dedicated "to those who pointed me to the path"—one of whom was Josephine MacLeod. In a letter written to Ujjvala, dated April 21, 1946, Gurudas Maharaj reminisced a little bit about this relationship. He wrote: "Yes, I remember your old home where I held some classes and Tantine coming to one of them with Dhan Mukherji, who was then a student at the University of Southern California."]*

Mukherji's book may be written well as a book, but as a biography it is a farce. It is a disgrace to write about Sri Ramakrishna a bundle of misstatements. If Sri Ramakrishna is what we believe him to be, his name will be ranked with Buddha and Jesus. And books written during the same period while his direct disciples are still living—when contradicting each other—will lead to a great confusion in the future. Think of the endless controversy about Jesus because the New Testament contradicts itself in many places. How can people have faith in an *avatar* when no reliable literature of his own time can be had? I hear that Rolland (the Frenchman) wants to write a life of Sri Ramakrishna. Tantine has sent him the

material. He also will get confused comparing our books with Mukherji's. He knows Mukherji.

Almora, March 26, 1927

My Life, by Isadora Duncan

I have read with great interest *My Life*, by Duncan. The dissatisfactory part of the book is that it ends six years before she died. The publishers might have given a short account of these last six years of her career. Did she die a disappointed woman (I think so), or did she succeed, after all, in establishing her school, her life's ambition? One gets so interested in this wonderful creature that one would like to know. Another disappointing feature is that nowhere is the year of her birth given. One would like to know her age at different periods of her life. She might have mentioned also what caused the death of her children. It was an auto accident, it appears. Perhaps I am exceptionally curious about details. I have not seen any of these complaints in the reviews. I read the book with great interest. It is a study. But I don't know why the book left a sad, depressing impression on my mind. Is it the sophistry, the futility, the waste of her life? One cannot help thinking what such a genius might not have accomplished had she met a man like Swamiji; for it seems to me that just a little turn of the mind might have made her a St. Teresa, a Nivedita, a Miss MacLeod. Perhaps this was her last life before the great change, a working out of *karma*, the fulfillment of worldly desires that seem necessary before all that greatness in her make-up could take a spiritual direction—the last veil of *maya* that in a future birth will be parted to let the true light shine through. There is a saying in India that one has to be a king before one can become a monk. One has to taste the highest this world has to offer before one can renounce the world. This, of course, like most sayings is not to be taken literally. The great point in Duncan's life was that she tried to reach and express the realm of beauty and bliss. Her search was misdirected, though at times she got a glimpse.

That is where a career of art is so deceiving. The vision comes; but instead of going heart and soul for deeper vision, all energy is used to express in matter this little glimpse of the

spiritual. So there is no spiritual progress. You know how the scriptures warn against the use of supernatural powers. If we are satisfied with, or want to improve one of these powers, spiritual search ends. It is so with the artist in most cases. All energy that goes in the execution of art, is spent on the material plane. That is also the danger of early religious teaching and of too much study. So Ramakrishna says: "First get God. After that do as you please." First taste the mango (don't simply get a look at it), and then begin to teach or write about it. Taste it—eat it first. The artist lacks the patience to do this. A tiny glimpse, and he must rush into teaching the world, reforming the world, showing the world. My art, my career! Then comes a little worldly success, praise, adoration—an inflated ego. Art is an inner vision that becomes perfect by concentration of the mind, by meditation, by withdrawal from the external, by chastity. Every ounce of energy has to be directed to that inner search instead of wasting it on execution and physical enjoyment.

So the greatest artists may remain unknown—a loss to the world? I doubt it. There will always be those who catch their vibrations and are satisfied to express them. Swamiji says: "Greater than Jesus, greater than Buddha are these God-men whom the world does not know." Their vibrations touch thousands of smaller minds. The perfected vision can never be expressed anyhow. The Infinite cannot be expressed in the finite.

For its sophistry, one might call Duncan's book dangerous, though it contains profound observations. And now, after all—except getting a little enjoyment from it—do you think that Duncan's dancing or teaching has done anyone any good? Has it made anyone purer, better, more spiritual? Not her direct followers, anyhow—as far as we can judge. They seem mostly to have been drowned in worldly, selfish enjoyment. Pleasure, pleasure, and more pleasure. Not one withdrew within himself to fathom this thing called Art to its real depths and source. Not one could withdraw from the world a few years to trace this thing called Beauty. Pleasure, disappointment, heart-burning is what most of her followers (and she herself) got from her art.

"Not by wealth, nor by progeny, but by renunciation the goal is reached" (Upanishads). In Duncan's life, love and art were constantly at war. In Ramakrishna's life, his love for God made his every movement harmonious and artistic. Those who knew him, at least, tell us that they had never seen such graceful dancing (in *kirtan*), had never heard such lovely singing. Artistic expression was a natural outcome of his love—not a pursuit in itself. It was not an aim, but a by-product. And his love was for love's sake, not for enjoyment's sake.

Kankhal, January 17, 1929

The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna

Here the swami with me reads to me M.'s Bengali *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* from 4 till 5 P.M. and the English edition from 9 till 9:30 P.M. It is nice to read a little together. M.'s Gospel is a marvelous record of Ramakrishna's dealings with his householder disciples. His dealings with his *sannyasin* disciples would make another story—more private—and it would emphasize more the *jnani* side of his life. M. makes him almost entirely a *bhakta*. This is the complaint some of our *sadhus* have against it. In the same way, we in the West look upon Swamiji almost entirely as a *jnani*, forgetting that he was a great *bhakta* as well. I must say that Swamiji, the *jnani*, has always appealed to me most. His—as he himself used to say—was a message of strength, the message that appeals most to the West. And when our trials come, as you are meeting them now, it is our only true consolation. "The Soul, subtler than the subtlest, the inner Self, is always seated in the hearts of all living creatures. One should draw that Self forth from the body boldly, as one draws the pith from a reed. Know Him as pure and immortal" (*Katha Upanishad*).

Binsar, December 22, 1931

My Shadow as I Pass

Just now I am reading *My Shadow as I Pass*. Mrs. C. [Cooke] read it first and said, "A horrible book, depressing. I hate it." I find it more interesting—not all depressing, though

it describes the furious agony of sorrow and desolation of a woman who lost her husband. It is a breath-taking story. But I enjoy it—however, in a different sense from Nijinsky. And I can quite forgive Mrs. C. for hating it. There is a psychological reaction in reading that varies with different individuals. Mrs. C. never loved her husband, and probably she felt jealous (unconsciously) of the woman who was so utterly devoted to her husband.

The book brought to my mind the love of Radha for Krishna, and her unutterable sorrow when she was separated from Him. And it also brought to mind the maddening agony Sri Ramakrishna underwent when he felt separated from his Divine Mother.

Another idea it brought to me was devotion is really the mind hankering after that which we love and desire most. It may be God or money or our house or business, husband, child, whatnot. Whatever we thus desire with all our mind—name, fame, a friend, an animal—is really our god. The Gita says: "In whatever form man worships Me, in that form I reach him." That, of course, means in whatever form man worships God—as the Incarnation, as Jesus or Buddha or Krishna, etc., or as Light, as an Ocean of Bliss, etc.—but may it not also mean worship as mentioned first? God, after all, is *all* things. He *is* the wife, the husband, the child, the cat, the dog. But, say the Upanishads: "If one worships anything for the qualities of that thing, one's love is limited and so is the result of that love. But if one worships Me in all things, then one attains Me, the Unlimited. Therefore, love the Atman alone, for then the object of your love will never change or perish."

God came to the woman in the book as He was worshipped—as her husband. So He came to Nijinsky's wife as Nijinsky. So He comes as money, as success, as friend, etc.—whatever we want with all our heart. The saints, realizing that all life is perishable and subject to change, chose God as their object of love, for He never changes. Sri Ramakrishna loved his boys. When Hazra rebuked him for loving them so much, Sri Ramakrishna replied: "I love God in the boys, not the boys as boys. The moment I no longer see God in them, I would not be able to look at them even."

All these thoughts the book brought to my mind, so I enjoy it. It has to me a pleasant reaction. But that, nobody would have been able to foretell. So each one must choose his own reading, and even then he will often make mistakes.

Almora, March 31, 1935

The Master as I Saw Him

In Almora they had eight and one-half inches of snow; more than I have ever seen there. I am reading *The Master as I Saw Him*, by Nivedita. I find it by far the most interesting book on Swamiji. Nivedita was a genius to understand him as she did and in the short time she actually knew him. The book is full of original ideas. I am reading it a little at a time, and I am enjoying it very much.

Kankhal, February 4, 1942

18

CURRENT EVENTS

World War I

This war is changing everything, and probably it will have its effect on the Hindu mind as well as on the Western mind. Swamiji's old saying was: "The East has to become more active, the West more quiet."

I hope good news is coming from the young men that went to the front. The papers speak very highly about the American army. What a blessing it will be when peace is once more restored on satisfactory terms. The Gita seems more and more wonderful as we read about these horrible battles. Imagine Sri Krishna perfectly collected, seeing clearly amidst all that confusion. What a wonderful character—body and mind ready to mix in the turmoil and slaughter, and the soul, as if looking on, unmoved and steady. Certainly *there* is an ideal for all humanity—inactivity in the greatest activity. If only the West could get a glimpse of what Vedanta stands for.

Mayavati, September 24, 1918

Gandhi

As *Young India* is so full of Gandhi's writings, it gives a good idea of the man and his life and convictions. I certainly believe

him to be one of the great men of our time. How he can accomplish the amount of work he does is a miracle. What a wonderful manifestation of spirit and energy through such a frail little body. To look at his photos, he is an ugly, emaciated, tiny creature. But his personality is such that whosoever meets him is simply charmed. His writings are unique. He is all originality, spontaneous. He *is* and *lives* what he preaches. However, it may not mean so much to you, as you don't know the conditions here. To me he is the true successor of Swamiji, repeating in his own way and living Swamiji's teachings. As a political leader he stands now in the background. He has left that work to (what he says are) abler men. But he is worshipped through the whole of India as a reformer.

The great and able leader of the political movement, Mr. C. R. Das, has suddenly died in Darjeeling. Another unique man gone! Foremost in the legal field, earning an enormous amount of money in his profession as a lawyer, averaging $10,000 per month, he renounced everything to serve his country, baffling and fighting the English government till his last breath. So India is in mourning. The demonstrations at this cremation are unequalled in the world. But all this may not interest you. And I had other thoughts in mind when I took up my pen to write to you again.

Almora, June 30, 1925

There is an English ex-missionary here, Mr. Andrews, who works hard for Gandhi. I don't spin, and spinning is far from popular yet in India—so is wearing handspun cloth. There is much talk, but not much sincerity, about all this *swaraj* (home rule). The Hindus and Mohammedans are as much at war as ever. However, Gandhi is winning the people over very slowly. I am not interested in politics, but I love Gandhi. I will send some of his papers again soon.

Almora, October 13, 1925

Gandhi's book may be perfectly all right. But many will doubt when it says ". . . could kill to gain his ends," as his foremost doctrine is *ahimsa*, non-killing, non-resistance—love

your enemies. But who knows? It probably meant, not he himself, but what might have come had conditions been different. I would not be surprised that, had it been possible, he might have advocated war to drive out the English. Who knows? So much depends on circumstances. A change of conditions, and we see a different man. Really we don't know ourselves —what we might not do under certain conditions. Therefore the sages are always distrustful about themselves. We never know when or how we may have a fall. "We are in danger so long as we have a body," says a saint.

Almora, March 24, 1926

Mahatma Gandhi was at Mussoorie where he held prayer meetings at 6 P.M. daily. Thousands attended. I could not go as it is three miles away and a climb of one thousand feet. I saw him once at Almora. He is still very active in politics, but leaning more and more towards religion. He has great faith in God and prayer. Every Monday he observes silence.

India's future still hangs in the balance. But thanks to the U.S.A. and other countries, the threatening famine may be averted. We are rationed, even for cloth, but I get all I need. I don't take rice—the main food in Bengal and South India —and only 2 or 3 slices of bread per day. I take meat, vegetables, and milk from our own cow and goat. Meat is mutton or goat. No Hindu here takes beef.

Barlowganj, June 10, 1946

The Tennessee "Monkey Trial"

[In the famed "Monkey Trial" in Dayton, Tennessee, science teacher John Scopes was convicted of illegally teaching Darwin's theory of evolution.]

Life is such a farce anyhow. The papers here, native and English, are much amazed about the Tennessee "Monkey Trial," a teacher being fined for teaching evolution in a school. One paper says, "America has prohibition; now they want mental prohibition: keep science, biology, genealogy and

everything that is not in the Bible out of their schools." However, "Let it be," as Swami Trigunatita wrote in his ledger when the accounts did not tally. Would we not have had lots of fun with old Swami Trigunatita had we known then what we know now? And still what fools we make of ourselves all the time, even now, by taking things so seriously—things that do not matter in the least. Most of our quarrels when we analyze them are nothing but a little hot air. If we could only remember that we are the Atman, how different life would be! But we forget to be the Witness, and then the mischief begins.

Almora, July 30, 1925

How different everything looks when we stand apart as the Witness. You have no idea how funny the Monkey Trial appears from twelve thousand miles' distance. So childish, so bogish, such a storm in a tea kettle. And there, an entire civilized nation is roused! And men, the greatest in the land, abuse each other in a court like schoolboys. I don't say this in a superior mood. Here we have our own fights—national freedom, trying to make the whole nation spinners of cotton, and whatnot. And it probably looks all very amusing to you in the distance. But here, people are ready to die for their ideas. *Maya* is the word!

The Seventh Day Adventist preacher, who believes that the world will soon come to an end, told me last year that many terrible things are soon to happen. Among other things, he said (he gets it all from the Bible) that America will get a state religion (probably Roman Catholic), that everywhere the teaching of this religion will be enforced in the churches and schools, that there will be a Sunday law that will compel people to go to church (it used to be so in England). Those who don't go once, at least, will be punished. There will be no freedom of speech; and a lot of other stuff. This Tennessee law made me remember this.

I don't believe in the absolute correctness of science. I would always say, "This is what science teaches today. What she will discover tomorrow, that may upset all her present beliefs, we don't know." But to hold the old Bible as authority literally is ridiculous. As regards evolution, there are now

many schools of opinion, one school coming strangely close to Vedanta. Finally, we must confess that everything is clothed in mystery. As Stewart says in the July *Atlantic*, "Science reveals more for me to wonder at, but solves nothing." The science of the future will laugh at the science of today. And so it will go on, always new mystery ahead of us, the unsolvable universe, *maya*. So Vedanta says *maya* cannot be known; it must be transcended. "Verily, this divine *maya* of Mine is difficult to cross over. Those who devote themselves to Me alone cross over this illusion (*maya*)" (Gita 7. 14). "The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings, causing them, by His *maya*, to revolve as if mounted on a machine" (18. 61).

I used to be somewhat annoyed at Sri Ramakrishna's attitude and replies to questions—his "I don't know, Mother knows" or "Mother can do anything." I see the wonderful wisdom of it now. Who knows anything in this mass of mystery? Certain things may have happened for a million years, and we call it a law of nature. But what is a million years with God? It is less than a second. If the human mind should change ever so little, a new universe with different laws would reveal itself.

I used to fight tooth and nail the idea that anything could happen not in accordance with established natural laws. Remember the old story of the white flower (in Sri Ramakrishna's life) on a bush of a red species of flower? Today, I believe all things possible. I believe in miracles. As Swami Saradananda once told me, "We don't know the subtler laws of nature. The *bhakta* comes in contact with these subtler laws. Hence they appear as mysterious miracles to others."

All Ramakrishna's experiences are opposed to the science of today. Science says, "Impossible," and rejects. "Mother, you know everything; you can do everything. I want to love you and be your child." This to me seems to be wisdom. And let the scientists fight, and let the fundamentalists fight. Good for them. We have all been fighters. Now let us have a little peace. Now let us retire from the arena and become onlookers and enjoy it.

Almora, September 5, 1925

News Lila

[Gurudas Maharaj used to visit Sister Christine once every three days, when she was staying with the Boshi Sens in their bungalow in Almora. He used to make the long climb to the Sens' in the morning in order to arrive there in time for breakfast. In this letter, reference is made to "becoming butter"—a spiritual metaphor, as clarified butter, or ghee, is considered one of the purest substances in the Hindu tradition.]

Your papers have been enjoyed by myself and especially by Christine. She still holds that the police are making trouble for Aimee to cover up their own shortcomings in finding the kidnappers. Now she is under arrest, or under bonds, at least. It is a nasty business. Who knows what may yet be revealed? As you know, nothing surprises me; human nature is beyond comprehension. All we can do is to wish good to all.

The articles on Valentino [Rudolph Valentino, the actor] interested me also. He has become somewhat of a national hero. It shows the tendency of the people. The Dempsey fight [Jack Dempsey was a famous boxer] had not yet come off. I hope to get that in the next bunch of papers. Life is amazing. And here half-naked, half-starved Gandhi is the national hero. We live in a world of variety. Mother Maya has certainly thought out a goodly number of attractions to hold Her children busy and satisfied in Her *lila*. But one or two escape anyhow. And that is part of Her play and fun also. Get out or "become butter." Does it not seem incarnations since you told Sw. T. [Turiyananda] that you wanted to become butter? That was before I knew you. But what a tiny speck our life is in eternity!

Almora, November 9, 1926

Charles Lindbergh

I have read about Lindbergh in different *American* magazines. He has my full admiration. I get more enthusiastic about such men than about all your religious teachers. And I get more satisfaction from the *American* magazines than from the religious papers.

Almora, August 16, 1927

Your very nice Christmas present, *The Life of Lindbergh*, came by the last foreign mail. I thank you so much. It is inspiring. Sister Christine, who claims him as her city fellow (he was born in Detroit), is quite excited over the book. She likes it so much. And it really was—I mean the deed and his behavior—as perfect a performance as it possibly could have been. No wonder the nation went mad over him. I certainly am glad an American did it. And now I wonder what it all will look like twenty-five years hence—such sudden changes in locomotion as we have had in a few years.

Almora, December 12, 1927

Swaraj

Now I am alone high up in the mountains, 7000 ft. with snow ranges between me and Tibet and China. In the glorious Himalayas. Far away from the tumult of the plains—especially tumultuous at present with India clamoring for *swaraj*. I think you get *Young India* from Gopi, and you know what is going on here. Two sides to every question, each side imagining itself in the right. It is a pretty serious struggle, but perfectly safe as far as individual foreigners are concerned. Politics is such a muddle and a question of sentiment more than reason, as far as the masses are concerned. My neighbor, Professor Rudra, gets the papers, so I keep posted. That is, I read the headlines, for newspapers don't interest me.

Almora, June 17, 1930

World War II

It is a good, hopeful sign that people come to inspect the ranch so soon after it was offered for sale. I hope you will have good luck. You remember Gopi's favored expression: "What is written on your forehead will happen." It is a Mohammedan saying. The Hindus say, "Rama's will." Who knows what will happen from moment to moment? Who knows God's will? Just now war is threatening on all sides. Except in the Atman I see no safety anywhere. The rest is all worry of some kind—real and imaginary. In our hearts we

are always anxious about something. So "everything in this world is full of fear; only in the Atman is fearlessness."

Almora, July 4, 1939

Our radio in the ashrama is out of order, but we get papers. Rather disturbing news. How long will this war last? No one, of course, can tell. Here we are quite safe, and you there also. This certainly is the Mother's wild dance of destruction of which Swamiji speaks in "Kali the Mother."

Kankhal, December 3, 1939

We have come back here from Kankhal on March 26. We were caught in a cold spell, rain and wind, that is still lasting. But we are all well and comfortable by Lord's grace. We are four swamis and a servant. The servant question has become a problem. Wages have gone up so much with increased prices, and over two million, I hear, are now in the army. And recruiting is still going on.

Barlowganj, April 4, 1944

I can well imagine the enthusiasm in America about the sudden peace with Japan, sooner than expected. India is too much occupied with her own problems to care much about celebrations. God alone knows how these problems will be solved, and what, after all, is best. I suppose, nations have their *karma* too.

Barlowganj, September 11, 1945

19

SHANTI ASHRAMA

[Though Gurudas Maharaj was with Swami Turiyananda at the Shanti Ashrama for only a year, Swami Turiyananda spent about fifteen and a half months there—a duration of time which was divided into three periods:

The first period lasted almost six months—August 3, 1900, till January 27, 1901. (During that period, Gurudas Maharaj arrived for the first time on December 9.)

The second period of Swami Turiyananda's stay at the Shanti Ashrama was from April 25, 1901, till early September 1901—a period lasting approximately four and one-half months.

The third period—Swami Turiyananda's last visit—was from January 8, 1902, till June 1, 1902.

When Swami Turiyananda left Shanti Ashrama for the last time on June 1st (He set sail for India on June 3, 1902), Gurudas Maharaj received the swami's instructions and blessings to continue living at Shanti Ashrama, which he did till about 1906, only to return circa 1913-1914, and again early 1919 till December 1922. The intervals in between (circa 1906-1912, 1914-1918) and 1922 till his death, Gurudas Maharaj lived in India.

The following extract from a heretofore unpublished letter written by Swami Turiyananda to Ujjvala is dated December 18, 1900, during the swami's first period at the Shanti Ashrama. It is

A Storm

We heard from Swami [Turiyananda] last on the 8th of Dec. Swami did not mention anything about going into retirement then. We will probably hear more about it before long.

You have not answered our question in regard to your tent, but the wind has settled it for you. We had a severe storm which brought your tent down. The burlap was torn and will have to be renewed all over, unless you should use a board or canvas when you come again. You cannot use it the way it is now.

Shanti Ashrama, December 26, 1901

Swami Turiyananda's Last Visit

The Garden

Dhira and her son arrived Monday. We had fine weather; but today it is raining. Al [probably Mr. Petersen, or Nischala] went out for a walk anyhow. I think he likes it here. Dhira is resting better and is in good spirits.

Swami is doing well. He observed silence for three days, but is talking again. The rest is doing him some good. He may come out the middle of March, but nothing is definite. Mother alone knows what his next move will be.

If you wish to send some seeds for the garden, you can send some curled lettuce, French carrots, radishes, Swiss chard, parsley, beets, turnips, spinach.

Mrs. Magee sent us a few books to read—Renan's *Life of Jesus* and some of Sinnett's books. It is kind of her. A change of literature is necessary at times, and I am sure we will enjoy them.

Shanti Ashrama, February 20, 1902

A Week's Rest

[The following letter extract is the first allusion made to any conflict between Swami Turiyananda and some of the San Francisco students. As the swami never disparaged his students in any way, we can only gather evidence of the type of suffering

he underwent from Gurudas Maharaj's letter extracts in chapter 20, "Vedanta Work on the West Coast" and chapter 25, "With the Swamis in India." Referring to this event, Ida Ansell, in her "Memories of Swami Turiyananda" (published in Vedanta and the West, *Nov.-Dec. 1952), wrote:*

> *"Early in this second session, Swami asked me to get my mother's consent to join the Ramakrishna Mission. This I did and expected to remain at the ashrama permanently. But conditions changed. There were complications and problems of which I knew little. Swami's health was bad. Dr. Logan started a magazine, without consulting Swami, which was a mixture of Vedanta and other things and contained many inaccuracies. Swami became more and more anxious to consult Swamiji again about the work, and it was finally decided that he should go to India for a rest and the desired consultation."]*

Swami is not quite so nervous, but not at all in a condition to come to the city. He does not yet work in the regular way. Just now he is taking a week's rest. It is hard to realize the tremendous suffering he has undergone during the last three months. This is a time to be sturdy, and it would not be prudent to mix matters. You are a Vedantin, pure and simple, and you want pure Vedanta—no mixed thing, no adulteration. Vedanta is a new movement, not a patching up of something we already have. Let it stand out clear and firm. All are welcome to gather under its banner, but do not drag the banner down or put it up over something else.

Your *Light of Asia* was duly received. Thank you. I will place it with Swami's books.

Swamiji is going to Japan and may come to America. But nothing is very definite.

Shanti Ashrama, April 17, 1902

A Place for Mother's Children

Well, of course you are welcome to spend your vacation here. This place is for Mother's children—you know that. Mother must here reign supreme; it is a place granted us by

the mercy of our Lord Sri Ramakrishna. It is our place; we are his accepted children, isn't that so?

Shanti Ashrama, May 9, 1902

On Their Own

The First Cool Day

Today is the first cool day after a very hot spell, and it is quite a relief. Yesterday it was 116 degrees F. in the shade and a scorching wind. That was warmer than the hottest day last year.

We had a letter from Sumati [Miss Margaret McConochie]. She had been in San Jose for the last month and is coming to the Ashrama the first time Mrs. Gerber goes down.

It is very kind of you to remember us in regard to reading matter. Swami took all his books except a few, among which is the *Light of Asia*. We are studying the *Crest Jewel* now. I know the *Narada Sutras*. I once possessed a copy.

We have not heard from Swami. Perhaps he will wait with writing till he arrives in India.

Shanti Ashrama, July 24, 1902

Visitors

We will all rejoice in having you with us for a while, and I hope you can manage to come before the rainy season. We have had an intensely warm summer, but the weather is very pleasant now. In fact, the mornings are quite cold. We may have Nandini [Miss Caroline Yoerk] with us during September; it would be nice if you could meet her up here. Sumati has disappointed us, but Mother knows what is best. We expect Sadhu-Charan up before long; he may be here any time.

Shanti Ashrama, August 22, 1902

The Log Cabin

The log cabin is 12 by 11 feet inside. It is very neatly finished and comfortable. We have finished it today, except the painting. The weather has been fine the last week. We would have liked to have you here, but it seems Mother wanted it otherwise.

Shanti Ashrama, October 17, 1902

The Meditation Room

I have written Dhira all the news if any, so I will not repeat. Our meditation room is greatly improved by putting canvas on the walls and burlap on the floor. Chetana's [Miss Bell] tent suffered from the last storm—the outer canvas on one side blowing to pieces—but we discovered it in time to prevent the whole cabin blowing away.

Shanti Ashrama, February 1, 1903

Heavy Rains

Sadhu [Sadhu-Charan] and Eloise leave tomorrow for Camp Taylor. We have had very heavy rains. The little brooks looked like rivers. One day it was impossible to get across, even on horseback. Now it is nice and warm, and the Ashrama will soon look its prettiest.

Shanti Ashrama, April 6, 1903

Mother's Place

Carl (Nirmala) [Mr. Carl Petersen] is also thinking of coming to the Ashrama (in June). And I think Shankari [Miss Gould] has it in mind too. Well, Mother will tell you all what to do. You know that I will be glad to have anybody come. This place is Mother's place and open to all Her children. May Mother continue to be kind to us.

Shanti Ashrama, April 16, 1903

[In a heretofore unpublished letter from Swami Turiyananda to Ujjvala, written April 29, 1903, from Brindaban, we find evidence that Gurudasa underwent a period of despondency at

this time, after Swami Turiyananda's return to India. In the following extract from that letter, we see how Swami Turiyananda appealed to his students to keep their close spiritual bond established at Shanti Ashrama:

> *"I hear from Gurudasa often. He is all alone in the Ashrama just at present. I know he is a brave and faithful soul. Yet try to encourage him in every way you can. Kind and loving words, even from the heart of near and dear ones, do a good deal to cheer up a soul which is not in its high spirits. Mind this well. It is a thousand times far better and more humane to console and sympathise with a fellow brother than to please one's self by visiting distant lands. Learn to be unselfish, my dear Baby, really and truly, and take heed to avoid all sophistries that lie so subtly in its way."]*

The New Swami-in-Charge

Preparing for November

[From 1903 till 1914, in the months of July or November, Swami Trigunatita used to go to the Shanti Ashrama for a one-month's stay with a band of selected students. In the following extracts, Gurudas Maharaj described his preparation for Swami Trigunatita's first trip to the Ashrama.]

I will have a busy time preparing things for Nov., but I cannot do very much alone. If I had someone here who understands those things, I would now be enlarging and fixing the kitchen, which is in a very poor condition. This would be the right time, as lumber is dry and light. The kitchen roof last winter resembled much of a sieve. As you notice I am *rajas*, and as you have no doubt plenty of that in the city, I will not send you too big a dose.

Shanti Ashrama, August 28, 1903

You are in a difficult position in regard to your coming here, unless the firm gives you leave. You will have decided by this time. I do not know whether Mira is coming. She has not written. But I had a nice letter from Sajjana [Mr. Ernest Brown]. He will be here on Oct. 15th and will stay until Nov. 13th. I wonder how many will come. We can shelter 12 persons now with what there is on the place, but they will have to go two in the large tents. I wrote everything to headquarters, so information can be had there. I hope all will go orderly and without much confusion. We will soon be settled after all and everything is here. I heard that Swami [Trigunatita] has all his rules made, and Dhira sent me some of them, referring to those who want to come in Nov.

I hear Swami Abhedananda is expected back in Oct. I hope to see you all soon. May Mother bless us all.

Shanti Ashrama, September 27, 1903

I am so glad that you can manage to come. Why doesn't Shraddha [Mrs. Stanley] come? There will be twelve, and we will be able to get along nicely that way. May Mother only be present, the rest is all "bosh and humbug," as Swami [Turiyananda] used to say.

We are having quite a rain at present, and it hampers me a little in the work getting things in shape. But I will get ready in time. I will be so glad to see you all after my long solitude. I hope Swami will like the Ashrama. Mother knows. It is all Her work. We need not be anxious.

Shanti Ashrama, October 10, 1903

[About Swami Trigunatita's first trip to the Shanti Ashrama, Ujjvala wrote an intimate account in her unpublished notes on Swami Trigunatita. The following extract provides us with a historical record of this period:

"The students were eagerly waiting to meet the new Swami, whom they knew only through letters from city members and rough drafts of lectures and class talks. There, too, Swami

made changes. We had been vegetarians the first two years, but fish and eggs had been permitted. Now these two protein items were omitted. A greater change was the separation of men and women. They ate at separate tables, Swami sitting alone at a small table between the two and reading from the Gospel or other sacred book. . . . The idea seemed to be that while feeding the body, the mind should also be fed. . . .

"Provision for work, study and relaxation was made and work schedules were assigned by the Swami, he himself doing all the cooking. Twice a week we took a long walk in the hills, Swami leading and I just behind him, holding onto his belt. One afternoon a month we went to the afternoon tea at the home of the Gerber family, about five miles down the valley.

"At these times he was jolly and full of fun, but there was no frivolity at meals or in the classes. His chanting, too, differed from that of the other Swamis. All were required to join in the repetition of 'Om Hari Om' in a low tone for five or ten minutes before meditation. Also, unlike the other Swamis, he liked some of the Christian hymns. Marching down to the meditation cabin everyone would join in singing:

"'He leadeth me, O blessed thought,
On words with heavenly comfort fraught,
Where'er I go, where'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.
He leadeth me, He leadeth me.
By His own hand He leadeth me.
His faithful follower I would be,
Since by His hand He leadeth me.'

"In spite of the changes, everyone benefitted by his stay at the Ashrama and returned to the city with renewed zeal to carry on the work. I think it was that first year that Swami introduced a new custom, that of spending one night in the open, gathered in a circle around a dhuni *fire. The Swami selected what he thought was the highest point on the Ashrama, had a foot path cut through the brush leading to the summit, and a* dhuni *fire laid. There we went at dusk*

and sat in a circle around the fire—chanting, singing, meditating until midnight. Then each in succession went alone to the fire and threw into it his sins with the statement, 'I offer to Agni all my pride and jealousy,' or whatever evil tendency he desired to eliminate. Some of us had quite a list. After that symbol of purification we were to conquer sleep and meditate for the rest of the night. The only two who succeeded completely were the Swami and Dhira. . . .In spite of these imperfections, it was a lovely experience, and surely no effort of purification is lost. The proceeding was repeated each year, with excellent results reported by all."]

A Loving Note

I will write you only a few lines and return Swami's [probably Turiyananda] letter, for which I thank you much. You are having a hard time now, but be of good cheer; it may soon change. You may have heard that Swami Trigunatita wrote me such a loving note, asking me to come to the city. It is so very kind of him, but, dear Ujjvala, I would be so happy if I might wait till someone else can take my place. It seems hardly right to leave a camp without anybody. However, I will obey Swami's wish in the matter.

I hope you will enjoy the festivities in the city.

May the Lord bless you, dear Ujjvala. Cling to Him. He is our only support.

Shanti Ashrama, September 9, 1904

Not in a Mood for Writing

[The following extract obviously refers to one of Swami Trigunatita's November trips to the Ashrama, from which Ujjvala was excluded. Perhaps the reason for this lies in her unpublished notes. She wrote:

"Many times through the following years I wanted to go, but could not—either because I could not get a vacation at that time, or as a matter of discipline. The following year, I was not allowed to go because I had resigned from my very good position in order to be free at that time. I reasoned that a regular position would frequently interfere with an

Ashrama session in November and therefore rented desk room in an office building, which would give me more freedom generally, and I could take my vacation whenever it suited me. I liked the new freedom immensely. If I felt in the mood for a little trip to the beach, I put a sign on the desk, 'Back at 2:00 P.M.' and took a cable car to the beach. The freedom was delightful, until Swami informed me that I could not go to the Ashrama, and no amount of pleading could alter his decision.

"I had many friends there, however, who, remembering how I had kept them advised of city doings, reciprocated with letters telling me all the good things I was missing. . . . They studied The Life of Saint Francis, *among other things. Whatever they were reading there, I read in the city."]*

You may have felt a little disappointed not to hear from me while Swami [Trigunatita] and others were here. And I was not at all in a mood for writing. In fact I wish to reduce my correspondence as much as possible. We have had such a very pleasant time. Everything was favorable; the weather was exquisite. Swami was in splendid health, only Dhira felt a little indisposed for a few days.

Vishuddha, like all of us, enjoyed it thoroughly. He is cheerful and looks splendid. They all like him very much, and he came quite alone to Swami and the others. Swami stayed again with me in the cabin. We had nice talks. Swami Satchidananda will be in the city on or about the 20th, and after a week's stay there will come to the Ashrama for a week or so. I may then come to the city after that.

Shanti Ashrama, December 5, 1904

Let the World Rush by

How I would enjoy having you all here, and especially now while the Ashrama is a picture of beauty and quietness. It is so necessary to step aside for a moment and let the world rush by and to withdraw within one's own heart for peace and happiness. May the Ashrama be helpful to bring at least a few to that pure and restful state.

Shanti Ashrama, April 4, 1905

Gurudas Maharaj's Return

[From 1914 till late 1918, Gurudas Maharaj left the Shanti Ashrama for a four-years' stay in India. Then in 1919, he returned to the Shanti Ashrama for a short period, probably till December 1922.]

Vegetables

The vegetables were very nice, but I thought I had asked you *not* to send any. We have loads of fresh stuff now, and the boys bring more whenever needed. We have plenty of food-stuff now. Swami [probably Prakashananda] sent another ten pounds of butter with a little wise advice as to its use, written by your brother.

Shanti Ashrama, October 22, 1919

Excitement at the Temple

I certainly had expected a letter from you by last mail, telling us all about the excitement at the temple. You wrote that Tom has struck it rich, but now Haridas (anyone else?) has gone with him. Swami wrote Henri to come at once, but he phoned later that it was not necessary, that others were going. Henri went to San Jose and sold the prunes. They made about $125 clear. So it paid them well. He brought back provisions, etc.

The report from the university was not very satisfactory, as the boys did not give the right soil. But what they sent was all right for alfalfa, provided they could irrigate, which is, of course, *the* question.

So you are running "Rajas" [Ujjvala's automobile] yourself now. I am glad to hear it, and I may still look forward to seeing you here on Jan. 1st to take me back.

Shanti Ashrama, November 17, [1919]

"Cambridge, Mass. 27 Dec. 1899"

I think you are right—it will soon be buggies everywhere, and I shall have to succumb just as I did 30 years ago with the

bicycle. If I ever enjoy buggies as I did the bicycle, it will be all right.

I am thinking of coming back the middle or latter part of next month, so don't send me anything that I will have to carry back. I don't know just when I will come, as it depends on the weather. I cannot make the trip when the roads are muddy. But, anyhow, I hope to be back before Xmas. There is one thing I would like to have, but do not send it here. I want a good dictionary, but *small*, so that I can take it with me on my round-the-world trips. I have *Webster's Primary Dictionary*, and it certainly is primary. It has served me 20 years now, so I think I may hand it on to the Ashrama. It's Turiyananda's with his name and "Cambridge, Mass. 27 Dec. 1899" written in it by himself. He gave it to me when you gave him the *Webster's High School Dic.* The size is nice, but that's its only redeeming feature. Keep your eyes open for me. There is no hurry at all.

We have not had any rain so far, but today it is threatening once more. A few days ago we thought it was going to snow. The thermometer went down to 22 degrees F. and there was ice in my wash basin. But now it is nice and mild again.

I suppose Swami Abhedananda has come? Let me hear all the news.

P.S.: Sunday morning:
Rejoicing among the farmers (the boys included), for it rains at last and they just got their grain in. We are making apple strudel to celebrate. Tell Mother Ansell about it.

The Hindu Temple
San Francisco, CA.
November 30, 1919

In the Mind's Eye

It Has Served Its Purpose

Pelikan writes that he is coming to India as soon as his mail contract runs out, but that will be in June 1926. So many things may happen before that time comes. He was expecting the two swamis for a visit of 12 days at the Ashrama [Shanti

Ashrama]. Hardly anybody goes there any more. And Pelikan is working so hard to improve the place. It almost looks as if it has served its purpose. Who knows, in a few years it may be grazing land again, as it was before we came. I still feel a great love for our Shanti Ashrama. But I realize that it would be very difficult for me to live there all the year now. And when Pelikan goes, there is no telling who will take charge. And that will make all the difference. The thought of the Ashrama always makes me feel a little sad. I don't know why.

Almora, May 5, 1925

In Fine Shape

Yes, Pelikan seems quite decided to come to India. He is putting the Ashrama in fine shape—painting the buildings, laying floors, building a new bathroom before leaving. He is such a worker. He deserves a good change, and I hope he will not be disappointed.

Benares, November 23, 1925

My Old Love

I must confess that at last my interest in the Ashrama is on the wane. It feels like a thing finished with. It seems dead. It had its use; and now it is still in existence, but with its purpose gone—an empty house with a forlorn occupant now and then. But that may be because I never hear the place mentioned anymore. I don't even know who is in charge. Perhaps if I went, my old love might revive. I certainly did love the place.

Almora, July 15, 1928

"Intoxicating"

I am surprised to see here dahlias in blossom now. How lovely was the Shanti Ashrama in April. Wild flowers everywhere. But they didn't last long. I remember how delighted Sw. Turiyananda was with the orange trees in blossom in Los Angeles. He often spoke of it. He called it "intoxicating."

Kankhal, February 19, 1940

The Well

The work has remarkably expanded since Turiyananda's time. I remember our celebration of Thakur's birthday at Mira's place. Simple and sweet. Your mentioning it brought it back to my memory. In the Shanti Ashrama, I think, some of us fasted that day. I remember Sw. Turiyananda and I went to the well early as usual, though it was bitterly cold, for bath and bringing water. To my surprise Turiyananda went inside the well, ducked his head under three times and came out. I followed his example but we did not tell anyone.

Kankhal, March 4, 1950

A Grass Fire

I am expecting a letter from you soon giving news about the Shanti Ashrama. The paper gave news from San Jose, dated Aug. 19. It mentions an uncontrolled grass fire which scorched 5,000 acres and destroyed several buildings of the isolated Hindu religious retreat, Shanti Ashrama. Four firemen were injured, two seriously, and their truck destroyed. It does not say how the fire started, or where. Probably hunters. Anyhow, I hope it did not start in the Ashrama.

Barlowganj, August 30, 1952

You have written very little about the Ashrama fire. Only that 3 buildings are burned and Arthur has gone to Olema. But how, where, at what time did the fire start? Who is responsible for the damage Mr. Gerber must have suffered?

Barlowganj, [undated]

Many thanks for your letters of Dec. 5 and Dec. 31. I also received Sajjana's yearly Christmas letter. He writes about the Ashrama fire, and from his letter it seems there was more damage than I thought. And some wonderful escape of the meditation room and the hill where Sw. Trigunatita's ashes are buried. They want to rebuild and keep up the place. But

first they want to build on the site they have bought in S.F. for the work there.

Kankhal, January 14, 1953

All Gone Now

Have you begun your article? It is fortunate you kept your notes. I don't think anyone else took notes. I thought I would never forget Swami's talks. But it is all gone now. I don't know if there is anyone in the Ashrama now. Anyhow, the place has served its purpose.

Barlowganj, May 28, 1953

20

VEDANTA ON THE WEST COAST

"Keep Together"

We were so glad to get your letter telling us about Swami's [Turiyananda] last days with you. Since then, we had letters from Dhira telling us about Dr. L.'s [Logan] doings, and the disharmony there seems to be between the members of the class.* It might lead to a division in the class, and that would really be harmful to the cause, I believe. Of course, I cannot approve of Dr.'s doings, but we must make due allowance and not condemn everything because Dr. does it.

As the work develops, changes are likely to take place, and no growth is possible without it. To stick to a few rules as if they were all in all and to oppose everything that does not come under those rules leads to narrowness and fanaticism. The thing is to stick to principle—not to let that go by any means—but forms are of secondary value.

The paper [probably the *Pacific Vedantist*] was started under wrong conditions, but since it is in existence and has the approval of Swamiji, it is of no use hammering Dr. on the head on this account. It would be wiser, I think, to do what we

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* See chapter 19, "Shanti Ashrama," and letter extract entitled "A Week's Rest."

can to make the paper worthy of its name than to undermine it and make it a lasting disgrace to Vedanta. As far as I am concerned, I will keep "hands off" rather than antagonize and oppose Dr. in everything.

A suggestion made in the right spirit at the right time may be helpful, Ujjvala. If the class is not conducted as it should be, why not ask Dr. in a kind and loving way to change it? Perhaps a letter, signed by those who wish to, might have some effect. You could ask him for meditation immediately after the reading. Then if anybody wants to make a speech, he can do so afterwards. And those who do not care to hear it, may leave.

My instructions from Swami [Turiyananda] are to help and be in harmony if I can; if not, to keep quiet, but not to antagonize. How often has Swami told us to "keep together"? If another swami comes, it will only make it difficult for him to straighten it all out and bring you together again. It is the duty of those who have sound judgment, Ujjvala, to look into this matter carefully. We must look at the situation without prejudice and leave personality out of the question.

This work is part of the Ramakrishna Mission work. Let us be careful what we do and not take any rash steps. I have heard so much of late about "Mother will take care of Her work," but that faith seems to have changed. I myself do not believe in saying, "Mother will see to it," and then sit with closed hands, doing nothing. But it is another thing to let our ambition run away with us.

Shanti Ashrama, June 29, 1902

Mother's Will

What you say is all very true, and expresses certainly Swami's ideas as they were once. But Swami's view in regard to the work had changed somewhat towards the last, and as matters are now, I think I came very near to expressing his view in my last letter [the previous letter dated June 29, 1902]. But enough of that; Mother's will shall come to pass. We can only do what we feel is right. Everything is in the motive.

Shanti Ashrama, July 24, 1902

Now or Never

[According to Ujjvala's unpublished notes, which provide us with a brief, firsthand history of the early San Francisco Vedanta work, we find:

"When Swami Turiyananda returned to India on June 6, 1902, for a little rest after being very ill, and for a consultation with Swamiji about the work, his intention was to return after a few months and continue the work assigned to him. The shock of finding that Swamiji had left his body about ten days earlier was so great that a return to America was not possible. After a few days at Belur Math, he left on a pilgrimage to holy places, and it was a long time before he returned to any active work, and then only in India."]

I was very glad to hear from you and to learn that you are so strong and resolute, and that all goes so well in the city. It is nice that all the students can meet at Dhira's. It will keep them together and keep the enthusiasm up until another teacher comes. Yes, let us say with the general when the evening closed in on him, "It will only make my feet go deeper in the ground!" Nothing can discourage us; we have something that no external circumstances can take from us. It is *now* or *never*. I hope Swami [Turiyananda] will feel the same way. Sometimes a great shock in times of weakness rouses us up and gives a new impetus and the necessary strength. It may either cure Swami or be fatal to him. We will know soon, I hope.

Shanti Ashrama, August 5, 1902

Our New Swami

[Swami Trigunatita, the new head of the Vedanta Society of San Francisco, reached San Francisco from India on January 2, 1903.

In one of Swami Turiyananda's heretofore unpublished letters to Ujjvala, dated January 20, 1903, we find his free and candid view of the new swami, the activities at the center before Swami

Trigunatita's advent, and what Ujjvala's role in the San Francisco work should be—specifically, her relationships, not only with the other members there but, most importantly, with God:

"I hope the new Swami has become old with you all by this time. You must be enjoying his company and teachings to your profit.

"I am glad you all kept up the meditation at Dhira's all this time and (are) continuing it still regularly. May Mother bless Dhira and you all, Her dear children, and may She give you understanding to discern things as they really are and not as they appear to be.

"Be strong, Ujjvala, and do not depend upon what this or that (person) would say about you, but consult the Mother within and act according to Her dictates. Be sure, whatever binds is not of Mother, and that which makes one free is of Her. Abide by the same with your whole heart. Have no private, selfish end, but have sincere love for truth and piety and Mother will speak from within you.

"How are you getting on, Ujjvala? Flaming upwards? Are you becoming 'butter' or spending your time and energy in social nonsense? Never let go your Ideal, but hold on to It *with a firm grip, and you will be led rightly to the goal."]*

It is but natural that we should be interested in the doings of our new swami and his views in regard to the work. He wrote to me that he intends to visit the Ashrama in March or April. We too had a letter from Swami Turiyananda, containing the same news as Dhira's letter. I hope he is well and happy.

Shanti Ashrama, January 14, 1903

Swami Trigunatita's Work

[On this subject, Ujjvala's unpublished notes give us a detailed account:

"Swami Tr(igunatita) arrived (in) January 1903. He wore an oriental costume and was a strict vegetarian. He stayed a few days at the home of Dr. Logan, the first President of the

strangers amongst the members. Are you still tak- ...lks in shorthand? That will keep you busy tran-

Shanti Ashrama, March 13, 1903

...'s unpublished notes shed further light on Gurudas Maharaj's allusion to her "rushing and running and tearing about" in the following extract. She wrote:

"Soon after the first of the year, Swami (Trigunatita) usually went to Los Angeles to give fresh impetus to the work there. Swami Satchidananda was sent from India to help him, and was put in charge of the work there. Some of the S.F. people went all the way to L.A. to attend his meetings.

"Swami started a Sanskrit class with the idea of preparing workers, though he did not state the object till much later. Dhira, Prasuti (Mrs. Wollberg), Mrs. French (Sarala), and others were the students. We had an hour lesson from 11 to 12 several days a week. We all loved that hour and had a happy time until we discovered that we were being prepared for platform work. Four verses of the second chapter of the Gita were assigned to each of us, and we were each to conduct a Monday night Gita class. After the usual meditation we were to read in Sanskrit, translate and explain the meaning of the four verses assigned, make a few comments and close with a Sanskrit sloka. *The next day the class hour would be devoted to criticism of every detail of the effort, including dress, appearance, translation, remarks, everything.*

"I wore a very elegant black silk skirt, a red silk waist with a fluffy chiffon top, and reflected with satisfaction that it was symbolic of the three gunas*—the enormous mass of black silk was* tamasic, *the red waist* rajasic *and the dainty white top a suggestion of* sattva. *During the preparatory lessons we were given a set of rules to repeat and absorb. They began, 'I am going to be a teacher to teach myself.'*

"I ...nquered my stage fright somehow. . . . (but) Prasuti ...! that we were not fit for platform work, and so ... Swami. 'Then do not come to the class,' said

Swami sternly. We were heartbroken, but he would not relent for a long time. He finally did relent, however, and we were allowed to attend the class again, but Dhira was the only one who ever did any real platform work, and that, not until after Swami left this world."]

Swami [Trigunatita] will now soon be with you again, but that need not put you all on strings. You hear what he has to say and meditate on it and live up to it, but no rushing and running and tearing about. If you can be of any assistance, that would be nice, but if not, then they must look for someone else. I hope you will always give me your opinion freely about the swami and the work.

Shanti Ashrama, July 20, 1903

Leave the Humbug

[By "humbug," Gurudas Maharaj was perhaps referring to the members' differences of opinion over the new swami's changes in method from Swami Turiyananda's old style. Of this Ujjvala wrote in her unpublished notes:

*"I loved both of the Swamis. Also I had close friends on both sides of the issue who tortured me by their persuasions to join this or that faction. I remained miserably neutral until a petition was sent to Swami B(rahmananda) asking that Swami Tr(igunatita) be permanently assigned to the Calif(ornia) work. This I refused to sign, and Sw(ami) Tr(igunatita) was displeased. A letter of explanation brought his forgiveness and things went on as before, until it was definitely settled that Swami Tur(iyananda) would not return. Later I wrote Swami T(uriyananda) for permission to take spiritual instruction from Swami Tr(igunatita) and began such instructions in 1905."**

Swami Trigunatita's method of instruction may have differed from Swami Turiyananda's in one way, but in another way, it was profoundly similar in its effectiveness. Ujjvala, in her

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* See Appendix D.

unpublished notes, candidly described some of the incidents which best illustrated the swami's versatile method of instruction and its results:

"The parents of Charlie Wollberg, a boy of fifteen, came to him and asked assistance in persuading the boy to obey his doctor's orders to give up smoking. Swami replied, 'Give me a week and then I will talk to him.' During that week he himself gave up smoking, and after that he had no difficulty in persuading Charlie to follow his example. Swami explained how mere words without the power of experience would have little effect.

"He was not equally successful in persuading another devotee to give up her attachment to a friend. For some time he was patient, but finally he said sternly, 'Unless you are willing to obey, do not come for any more lessons.' She moved to another part of the city, but continued to go to the lectures and classes. Finally she became so homesick, she pleaded to come back under certain conditions: 'If you will be here at 6:00 A.M. on New Year's Day, you may come.' This meant coming by street car halfway across the city before daylight, walking down the steep Fillmore hill in the dark. She was so hungry, she met those conditions, and was rewarded by weekly half-hour lessons. These half hours were not spiritual lessons in one sense, but simply half hours in the Swami's presence and varied greatly. Sometimes he would be busy with other things and she would sit quietly and watch him work or would browse over the books. Sometimes they would talk and he would answer questions. He thought of writing an easy Sanskrit primer for his students, and often he dictated to her. Usually he gave her candy and once when she was not feeling well, he gave her pickled limes, explaining how they used them a great deal in India for medicinal purposes. Such infinite compassion is very rare, and such a half hour a great blessing.

"On one occasion she entered the building as a city official was leaving. What his business was is not known, but the Swami's opening remark to the pupil was unforgettable. 'I sit here and watch the great waves of difficulties roll in, and then I look into the waves and see God's hand.'"]

Swami sternly. We were heartbroken, but he would not relent for a long time. He finally did relent, however, and we were allowed to attend the class again, but Dhira was the only one who ever did any real platform work, and that, not until after Swami left this world."]

Swami [Trigunatita] will now soon be with you again, but that need not put you all on strings. You hear what he has to say and meditate on it and live up to it, but no rushing and running and tearing about. If you can be of any assistance, that would be nice, but if not, then they must look for someone else. I hope you will always give me your opinion freely about the swami and the work.

Shanti Ashrama, July 20, 1903

Leave the Humbug

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Swami's [Trigunatita] work has commenced again, and I hope you are not too much involved in the externals. Try to get the real thing, and leave the humbug alone. I may come to the city this fall, if Mother allows. I would like to come and see you all and the work in the city. But I cannot tell how it will turn out. Gopika and Sarala [Mrs. French] wish to stay a little longer. I do not know if others are coming. Do you know when Swami [possibly Satchidananda] is expected?

[Shanti Ashrama], August 11, 1904

Mother Will Send the Teachers

I had a letter from Turiyananda. He says, "My health is very much better than before, though I have not yet been able to settle anything as regards the course of action I should follow." He sends his best wishes and love to all. He writes, "Mrs. Kelly wrote me to enquire if it would suit me to come to America, as Swami Trig. finds it necessary to have a Swami to help him do all the work there. I have written to her about the arrangement already made by S. Trig. for a junior swami from the Advaita Ashrama in the Himalayas." This to me seems quite suggestive. I mean, it seems as if Swami might have accepted had he been asked to come to Los Angeles. Don't you think so? Please do not mention this to anyone except Mira. It is strictly confidential. But, of course, if it is Mother's will, then it could be easily arranged to have Turiyananda also on this coast, for one swami could be in the Ashrama most of the time. And I wish it could be that way. But ours is not to plan, but to make ourselves ready for the teaching, and then Mother will send the teachers.

[Shanti Ashrama], August 17, 1904

Mother Reigns

I do not think that it would be advisable to make any effort to bring Swami Turiyananda to this country at present. I do not think that he would come to the Ashrama, as that is too much connected with the S.F. work, but I think he would have accepted for Los Angeles—that being an entirely separate

field. But we need not worry, Mother reigns. Let us only try to think of Her.

Shanti Ashrama, August 28, 1904

[About the time Ujjvala received the above letter extract from Gurudasa, Ujjvala must have also received the heretofore unpublished letter from Swami Turiyananda, dated January 26, 1904, from Brindaban, of which the following is an extract. In spite of all the speculation and encouragement concerning his return, Swami Turiyananda remained aloof from such plans and loyal to Swami Trigunatita's work:

"Think of Mother, Ujjvala, that you may become Mother's altogether. Do not pray to Mother that way—that She may take me there. Let Her do what She pleases. Then you shall feel free and I, all right too. Swami Trigunatita is right in saying that to make spiritual progress in the Western countries is a very, very hard thing. But I believe he is not disappointed for that. He will work there as best as he can. I am very glad he is doing much better now. I have got the pamphlet 'Vedanta Society of San Francisco' for the year 1904, sent to me by the Swami. I was glad to see it.

"It pained me to understand from your letter, Ujjvala, that you do not feel free to act as you please in your dealings with the Vedanta Society. I do not see any reason why it should be so. That which shall interfere with your freedom can hardly prove helpful to you. Please do not feel that way towards the Society. Be free to go or not to go to the lectures, etc., according to your own inclination. Otherwise the Society will become a sort of dread afterwards."]

Another Swami

[According to Ujjvala's unpublished notes, Swami Trigunatita was expecting the president of the Ramakrishna Order to come for a visit:

"A stern disciplinarian to his children, Swami was just as stern with himself. When he started the monastery, he made rigid rules for the neophytes. Most of them continued to

work for some time, but slept and had their meals in the Temple. When the third storey was added, it contained a three-room apartment for Swami Brahmananda, who was urged to come at least for a visit, and each of the towers was a little room on the roof, really a fourth storey. These were occupied by the monks, who did most of the work except the cooking. When Swami Brahmananda could not come, his apartment also was occupied by the monks. Swami himself slept in his office on the first floor of the building. His only concession to the pleas of his devotees was to put a mattress on the floor, on which he slept about four hours."]

Swami Trigunatita has sent money to India for another swami. Do you know whom he expects to come? Have they started the building of the home?

[Shanti Ashrama], August 3, 1905

The Ashrama and the City Work

[About the Ashrama, Ujjvala wrote in her unpublished notes:

"Businesslike methods were also introduced in regard to expenses. Prior to this (under Swami Turiyananda) the expenses had been borne by voluntary offerings according to one's means. Now there was a set charge per month for rich and poor alike. Voluntary contributions from those who could afford it were accepted but not required."

About the city work, Ujjvala also described in her unpublished notes:

"In the meantime the work was growing, and Mrs. Petersen's flat was no longer big enough to accommodate the people who came to the evening classes, so the Petersens moved to a larger flat at No. 40 Steiner Street, and I rented a room in the neighborhood. The new flat was spacious enough to hold even the Sunday lectures there and continued to be the headquarters of the Society until sometime in 1904 when the Swami felt it was time for the Society to have its own building. Then he conducted a building fund campaign, and

everyone responded to his utmost ability. Soon there was enough to start operations, and the cornerstone was laid in August 1905, the building was dedicated on January 7, 1906, and the first regular lecture given a week later. . . .

"In addition to his lectures and interviews, (Swami Trigunatita) did all the cooking. The monks did the cleaning and dish washing and the gardening. To Swami a Temple required a garden. In that part of the city where there was almost no space between the buildings a garden seemed impossible, but the Swamis have a way of accomplishing the impossible. Sw. Tr(igunatita) applied for and received permission from the city to remove four feet of the sidewalk on two sides of the building. There he put some rich soil, protected and retained it by concrete blocks on which was an ornamental wrought-iron fence. Behind the fence they planted many beautiful flowers and shrubs. The two upper storeys of the building did not extend completely over the first storey, the roof of which added to the garden possibilities. Deep square boxes containing beautiful plants and even climbing vines were placed against the walls very effectively. Seated in the big dining room and noting the lovely flowering vines peeping in the bay windows, one could easily imagine a beautiful and spacious garden adjoining the building. . . .

"When the monastery was pretty well established, the next venture was a convent. A flat was rented across the street from the Temple and nuns started cooperative housekeeping, with Mrs. Petty in charge. I was the youngest nun. Each nun had a room which she furnished herself according to her taste and means. Those who had no income kept their positions as the monks did."]

Since you collect the Ashrama money, it is, of course, better that everyone gives it to you. You can then send it to me or give it to Swami if you prefer to do that. Please let me know how much you give Swami and when you give it.

You never think of coming again, do you? Why is that? You seem more interested in the city work, new building, etc. Well, that is all right. Only, I think this is such a good place here, therefore I like others to come and live here too. I will be

own hands. And often they do, so we call them worldly and blame them for their mercenary spirit.

I hope the opposing parties will come together now. But I fear that it will not happen unless a swami from here goes there. That is really what is needed now—a new man who can arouse new interest and enthusiasm. Otherwise there is danger that the spiritual side of the movement suffers and the Society, as society, becomes the main object—the thing Swami Turiyananda was so afraid of. If I see Swami Premananda, I will explain everything to him, and I shall ask him to go to the West. But I do not know when that will be . . .

[Here for the first time, we find that Swami Premananda, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, was considered as a successor in the San Francisco work. In one of Gurudas Maharaj's unpublished letters to Mira (Mrs. Magee), dated September 3, 1915, he further elaborated on this possibility:

"I am glad that Dhira heard from Brahmananda. . . . Premananda may go after all, tho' it does not seem in the least probable. I know that I could exert some influence in the matter, but I will keep hands off. Let the Lord decide and do. Perhaps you have seen my reply to Dhira. If they really wanted me I might have come, but honestly, Mira, I do not believe it. And unless a Swami goes, of course, it would be absolutely useless. Premananda is one of the oldest Swamis in age. He has but lately recovered from a severe attack of cholera. He is a fine man. You remember what he has done for me the first five years I was here. No other Swami *would have done it. It was from an Indian standpoint especially most caring and loving, and he did things for me which carried with them a great deal of risk. It was thro' him that I have enjoyed privileges that no Westerner has enjoyed in India. He will not be much of a lecturer and he knows little English. But he will be most helpful to devotees of the Lord. There lies his strong point. . . . Personally as a teacher I do not think that he can compare with Sw. Turiya. I mean, for me personally he could never begin to hold Sw. Turiya's place. But for others, no doubt, he would be exactly the man. He loves to speak about the Lord and Swamiji, and*

he thinks much of worship. He would probably introduce that if he goes. . . . "

The possibility of Swami Premananda coming to the West is further corroborated in unpublished conversations with Swami Prabhavananda. He is recorded as having said: "After Swami Trigunatita had died, the devotees in San Francisco wanted another disciple of Thakur to come. They wanted Swami Premananda. Harihar (later Swami Vasudevananda) and I were then brahmacharis *at Belur Math. One day Swami Premananda said to us, 'Boys, read the Bible and get ready to come with me to America!' We knew, of course, that it was only a pipe dream, but we read the Bible. Then Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) dampened the spirit."*

Gurudas Maharaj's letter to Ujjvala continues . . .]

. . . Dhira deserves help. I would be very glad to stand by her, should I return. In this second letter she also asks me to come back. But in neither of her letters is it clear in what capacity she wishes me to come. In her first letter she simply asked me to come. In this second letter also she asks me to come and help them out in their difficulties. But what can I do? I am not fit, and I have absolutely no leaning to help permanently in the city work. Of course, Dhira mentions that it is difficult for them to keep Mr. Reckstiner (?) in the Ashrama, but she does not mention anything of my going there. However, I learned from the letter which she wrote to Turiyananda, that that is what she has in mind. For to him she writes, "I hope that Gurudasa will be willing to come back now and stay and take charge of the Ashrama."

But don't you think it is better that they first organize the Ashrama also? We know nothing about the Ashrama affairs. You remember, we were told that it is state property and that the state was represented by a trustee. I think this is a mistake, as the property was given to Swamiji. We were also told that there is a $1,000 debt on the Ashrama. Now all these questions should be settled once and for all. We were told that anybody could go to the Ashrama who called himself a Vedantin, unless it could be proven in court that he was not a Vedantin. Now that certainly is a muddled business. To leave

India, to incur that enormous expense, to give up the advantages which I have here, to enter into such a mix-up is certainly no temptation. So I have asked Dhira to settle all these questions first, so that we know where we stand and where we are going. If the Vedanta Society really wants the Ashrama, and they are ready to show their willingness by organizing it properly, then it would be easier for me to decide. I am ready to give my service where it is really wanted.

I believe that an ashrama is needed in America. It should be a strong, spiritual support to the city work. The two should support each other and strengthen each other. "Periods of solitude are very necessary for a seeker of God," Sri Ramakrishna says. And if those who are roused by the city work can go to an ashrama, it will be a great help to such students. That is why I offered to take charge of the Ashrama before I sailed for India. I consider the Ashrama just as important as the city work. Of course, the place has its disadvantages of food and climate, but that would not weigh so much where there is an earnest desire for truth. Mother gave us that place, so let us make the best use of it as long as we have it and no other. That is my point of view. But unless the members of the Society share that view, it would be of little benefit to others. So let them consider that first, and if they are in earnest, let them straighten out the Ashrama business. I feel sure that help will not be wanting where there is true love for the Ashrama. And I also feel sure that Mother will make me do my share when the time comes.

Mayavati, January 16, 1915

All Work for the Same End

I hope that somehow or other I will be able to come out to California again soon, if possible with Swami [Turiyananda]. That would be a boon to the Ashrama, would it not! And Prakashananda seems to be very sensible and liberal and he would also like it. I think all that old, foolish, suspicious spirit is gone now, and everyone understands that we all work for the same end. I think Prakashananda and I would work nicely together.

This morning your long-expected letter came, dated Sept. 27th, so you are not to blame for the delay. Three months for a letter to reach here! Think of it. Reading your letter makes me feel like jumping on board the first steamer that goes. How I wish I could have gone with you to the Ashrama. Do write soon and tell me all about it.

Udbodhan Office, December 21, 1917

Thoughts on the Ashrama

Prakashananda's attitude towards the Ashrama is the right one. Everybody, if worthy, should be allowed to go there, member of the temple or not. If they go there as nonmembers, they will probably join the Society when they leave the Ashrama. The two places should work together in that spirit. We cannot force people to join. It must be their wish to do so. And the best way to get members for the Society is to make it worthwhile for them to join. Then everyone will be glad to do so.

Udbodhan Office, January 24, 1918

I have decided to come, if I can. My passport will be given. That is one consolation. But I am so impatient. There is no Mira now, so you will have to manage me in America. I wonder what you are going to do with me. But, no doubt, you will send me to the Ashrama soon. I would like that to be our Math, a place for coming and going—at least if the people want it. What will Prakashananda say? He is having such a glorious time now, that we cannot blame him for wanting things to go on just as they are, and no butting-in. It will all be settled nicely, I am sure. He seems so happy now, and I shall be the last to spoil it. Happy people are not so abundant, if you come to think of it. I am glad the Wollbergs are kind to him.

Kankhal, April 14, 1918

I was interested to read your last letter that came only 2 days ago. I am rather surprised to see that Brown is president.

I thought that he had almost broken away. But it is nice, I think. He will probably enjoy it, and he has been so faithful. I am also surprised to hear that the other faction wants Swami Abhedananda [He was then teaching on the East coast]. But who knows? I would have thought that if they wanted a swami, they would have sent to India to get one. Perhaps they have given up hope of getting one from India. And it is possible that the Math would not send one to San Francisco where they have asked Prakashananda to take the work in hand. But I am not much interested in all that. I think one swami in a city is enough.

I don't feel quite so attached to the Ashrama as I used to. But that is natural. Younger people should take an interest now and keep up the place. And, Mother willing, we can go there now and then. Autos are coming in now and then, and I would not be at all surprised if the Ashrama will have one before very long. Pelikan intends to buy a Ford but was asked to come here before he got the money earned. The stage [coach] driver said he would bring in the party from San Francisco for $5 per head. He could make the trip in 5 or 6 hours. Quite different from the past, is it not?

Shanti Ashrama, May 29, 1919

Ananda Ashrama

When is H. [Haridas] coming to India? Write all the news. You know, of course, that a swami [Swami Prabhavananda] for Los Angeles came with Prakashananda, and also that Paramananda from Boston has started an ashrama [La Crescenta] near Sierra Madre—135 acres, 6 miles from Los Angeles. A tram goes within 1 and 1/2 miles of the ashrama. They have an automobile, and there is a building on the place which houses the workers who are there now.

Mayavati, July 22, 1923

The Ananda Ashrama [at La Crescenta, under Swami Paramananda] seems to be building up fast. It is wonderful how some of the old students keep up their enthusiasm. It is enviable.

The S.F. work seems to be booming too. There is talk of enlarging the auditorium.

Almora, April 28, 1924

A Nice Ten Days

Prabhavananda writes that he and Prakashananda had a nice 10 days in the Ashrama. Dr. Enos took them in her machine [auto] via Livermore and went back again to take them back via Mt. H. [Hamilton]. A Ford car ran into them around a curve. Her car lost a light, but the Ford car required two hours' doctoring before it could move out of their way. It looked like a heap of junk, but seemed to be flexible. No personal injuries.

Class at the Ashrama will be in October this year. Prabhavananda will conduct the city work during that time. All classes at the temple were stopped during June. Lecturing is quite an effort for Prabhavananda, who has had no previous practice. He and P. [probably Swami Prakashananda] seem to hit it off well.

Almora, July 10, 1924

"One Must Rule by Love"

Your description of the Ananda Ashrama is just about what I expected of the place. I have no desire for ashramas anymore. We had a talk about it this morning at breakfast with Boshi [Sen]* and [Sister] Christine. Christine asked me what I thought of it. My answer was that I don't believe in colonies of any kind—too much criticism, people too intolerant, too many cranks. It is possible only when there is a strong and absolute leader, one who has perfect authority. So long as Paramananda has that and a few to back him up, the ashrama may go on. When authority goes, there will be chaos, the end of it.

It is authority that keeps the Roman Catholic church together and the monasteries. Those who no longer bow before it are kicked out. Or, as Sw. Turiyananda said, "One

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* Boshi Sen was assistant to Dr. J.C. Bose, the famous scientist.

must rule by love." It means the same. We give authority to one whom we love. In that case bondage is freedom. Two or three is all that should live together—even the best of friends.

I feel sorry for Sarala and the Allens. Of course, the Allens can step out if the place [Ananda Ashrama] doesn't suit them. I don't know how Sarala is situated financially. Sw. Abhedananda, I hear, asked her to live in his ashrama. It would have cost her very little, if anything. I hear he even offered to pay for her hotel expenses if she could not live at the Belur Math. But she seems to have preferred Paramananda. Who knows the play of *maya*. I wrote her a nice letter (at least, I thought so) just before she left India. She never answered it. Perhaps she took it in a different light. It is all Mother's *lila*, Her play.

Almora, October 11, 1926

"Save Me from My Friends"

Have you ever noticed how we go through life with our mind only half alert—a six-cylinder mind, giving only three cylinder service? I have often noticed this. When I read an article for the second time, I observe many ideas which I overlooked at the first reading. In the movies when I saw the same picture twice, I used to see things that had escaped me the first time. And there is another peculiarity—the mind notices only what it is interested in at the time. People will say, It is strange how things come to us just at the right time. I have had that often. When I write an article, I will read somewhere just what I wanted to know or the word I was looking for. It simply means, not that things *come* to us, but that the mind is in a condition to notice these things, to register them.

Here is an example. In the afternoon I wrote the first part of this letter. In the evening I read Barnum's life, and this is what I came across. I would never have especially noticed it at any other time. "Pretend to a fault if you haven't one (if that were possible), for the one thing the world never forgives is perfection. . . . Disraeli once said of Gladstone that he was a man without a single redeeming vice." That is why our friends in overpraising us always arouse antagonism and, thus, do more

harm than good. "Save me from my friends," Sw. Turiyananda used to say. And in our Vedanta Societies in America I noticed that the most harm was done by students always praising their own favored swami. The others get annoyed and react, and the fight is on. Once acknowledge a weakness in *your* swami, and peace is restored, and everyone is happy again.

Almora, March 29, 1928

The Los Angeles Work

[In 1924, Ujjvala moved from San Francisco to Los Angeles, and was, from then on, a witness to the Los Angeles work. Then when Haridas died in the late 1940's, Ujjvala came to live at "the Vedanta Home," in Hollywood.]

The swamis seem to be doing well in southern California. Give my loving remembrance to Prabhavananda when you see him. And Ashokananda seems to be making a hit in S.F. No one here thought he would be such an excellent lecturer. America brings them out. Our American freedom takes hold of everyone who goes there. "Brings out the Atman," Swamiji used to say.

Binsar, July 1, 1932

There was a nice letter from you and one from Mr. Brown (Sajjana) and Sw. P.'s [Prabhavananda] new little magazine, *Voice of India*, which was a surprise. I didn't know he contemplated this. Very neatly done. And as *The Message of the East* has become a quarterly, it will have its place. Rather nice that he is doing it with Sw. Ashokananda. And then the news about the temple in Los Angeles. The *bhaktas* will be glad to get a place of worship. I didn't know there was so much room on their property. It probably will be a small structure. Anyhow, it shows enterprise and life. I have written to the swami to thank him for the magazine, and I hope we will get it regularly. The language is excellent as it is sure to be as long as he has his co-editor who is, I hear, an authority in English.

Almora, January 29, 1938

Swami Prabhavananda is "up and doing," as Sw. Turiyananda used to say. The ground is already broken and the temple is to be completed in May or June. It will be lovely to have a little temple there.

There is talk of Bhakti [Helen Rubel], who gave the money for the Belur Math temple, staying in India till the temple is fully completed, while the others are going back this month. In that case, she may come to Almora for the hot season.

Almora, February 12, 1938

"As in the Days of the Rishis"

[Olema, owned by the Vedanta Society of Northern California, has a monastery and large retreat.]

The ashrama at Olema is such a vast tract that you will have been able to see only part of it, unless the car can take you around. You may have had a chance even to see wild deer on the place. I remember once, when I was all alone there, I went a little outside the Shanti Ashrama, south where there is a spring. As I sat there a large buck came slowly to the spring, followed by 2 does. They looked at me, but as I sat motionless they took me as part of the landscape. They drank and moved on. It was a lovely sight. Sw. Turiyan. once said, "In an ashrama there should be deer, as in the days of the *rishis*." And I remember how upset he was when a hunter shot a rabbit at the Ashrama.

Barlowganj, September 29, 1948

21

CONSOLATIONS

On Mira

Keep the Turiyananda Spirit Alive

When I returned after a pilgrimage in the Himalayas of almost seven weeks, I was greeted by Herbert's cablegram: "Mother died. Writing."

Dear Ujjvala, how you must miss her. A rock has been swept away. A pillar has been removed. Our house is shaking. Shall we all go down or shall we stand closer together and keep the Turiyananda spirit alive in the strength of her greatness? She admired strength. Let us not disappoint her. Let us live so *we* also may taste of that freedom that was hers. Then, in that freedom we will unite with her; we will all be raised where she is.

Be strong, Ujjvala. We want strength now. Let us stand together and support each other. In the rules of the Ramakrishna Mission, Swamiji wrote: "We should live so that in our every act Sri Ramakrishna is reflected." Let that be our motto. I can honestly say that it was so in Mira's life.

Poor Herbert, poor Grandma. How empty the little breakfast room must seem without her. What nice times we had there. Do you remember? Poor Grandma waiting in vain on Saturdays to hear her step coming up the stairs and to see her

laughing face and to hear all the college news. She was so human and so divine—a wonderful combination. What depth lay hidden beneath her frivolity. Blessed Mira. It is grand even to cherish her memory.

I spent five days with Swami Turiyan. in his little ashrama at Almora. It is called the Ramakrishna Cottage. The situation is lovely on the slope of a hill overlooking a narrow valley and mountains in front. There is very little ground with the cottage. The cottage has four rooms and a veranda. Swami was in a very nice mood. He urged me to stay at least a month. But I was anxious to return to Mayavati. It was at Swami's that I got the cablegram. I had asked for my mail to be sent there from Mayavati. Swami said, "Mira was a power and a great *bhakta*." He mentioned her name several times during the following days. He was not sorry. He said, "It is good that she did not suffer much. I am rather glad for that." He was to come with me to Mayavati, but at the last moment he decided to come a little later, as some work had to be finished at the cottage.

Mayavati, June 27, 1916

The Plan Will Stand Revealed

Is it not true: "When the life is lived, the plan will stand revealed"? How clear it all is now—the plan of her life—to make others happy. You have touched the right cord—selfless service was the plan.

Great souls go early so that the plan may stand revealed and *we* may be blessed. For such is the irony of life, that we do not see clearly until it is all over. We see the play, but when the curtain drops, we begin to think. Then only do we see the motive, the plan. And we sorrow that it was over so soon; we want the curtain to rise again. But, perhaps, it is better so. For as long as we see, we do not think. And even while we think, we do not act. And life means action. We have caught the plan, now we must take the stage ourselves.

"Life is realization," Swami Turiyananda used to say. "To live the life is *samadhi*." It sounds strange, but I am beginning to understand it a little now.

Swami Turiyananda wrote in his latest letter, "Mira belongs to Sri Ramakrishna. I feel sure of that. Many have gone

before us, one by one. They will make our way clear, as we also are not to stay here for long."

But while we are here, we must not forget the plan—our own plan, for the Mother acts many parts. We must be true to ourselves—each one playing his own part well. We cannot all be Miras. There must be the Ujjvala plan and the Herbert plan and the Gurudasa plan and many other plans. The Mother's play is full of variety, and many are Her actors. It must be an all-star act. The humblest part must be enacted as perfectly as the part of the hero. Then the Mother will be pleased, and She will clap Her hands and say, "Well done, well done." And perchance She may lift us to Her breast, as Sri Rama took to his breast the little squirrel and blessed it with his touch.

Let us see what the Mother has planned for every one of us.

Mayavati, August 2, 1916

Hold the Highest Idea

[In the following extract we can appreciate Gurudas Maharaj's generosity of mind by the degree of greatness he could see in others. About Mira, Gurudas Maharaj wrote to her son Herbert in an unpublished letter, dated March 10, 1917:

"Was it a wonder that I sometimes seemed to see divinity in your mother? I may not have cared for many things she did. But that divinity, that spirit, was always there shining through the skin, through the eyes, through her words and deeds. You know, personal attachment there was remarkably little. But there was that deeper something—that recognition of the true within. The only real pain I have felt since her departure is that others could have so utterly failed to understand her. I have felt much grieved at that."]

Everything is simply speculation about the departed. But we know one thing, and that is that behind the apparent is the Real. So we must think of the real Mira, that great soul that we knew laboring under the limitations of life on earth. The soul never comes nor goes, it is always near and always free. And with that soul, we must commune, going deep within

ourselves. External communion is cut off; now we must have soul communion. And Mira's soul we must find resting in Ramakrishna, the great Universal Soul. The rest is all *maya*.

Whenever I saw such greatness in Mira, I really had a little glimpse of her soul. And I always tried for that—to see the real Mira. We must continue to do so. No more weakness, no more imagination, but the real thing—her soul, your soul, and my soul, bathing in that ocean of eternal bliss always. That is a grand vision because it is a true vision. It is a blissful vision.

Once Ramakrishna prayed to the Divine Mother for Her vision. He saw an ocean of light, and the waves came rolling in and swallowed him up and he lost all consciousness in that ecstatic bliss. Our soul is always floating and dancing and diving into that ocean of bliss. So why not try to see and feel that? I have read of other saints having had the same experience. So we must accept it as a fact. And, Ujjie, I know it to be true, but I forget.

What a little, nasty place this world is until our spiritual eye is opened. We cannot even see straight. What more proof do you need as to the madness of this life? So away with all manifestation, gross or subtle, and keep only the spiritual vision. When I remember it, Ujjie, I am really glad for Mira. She knew all this, and she loved Ramakrishna. We need not be anxious about her. Only hold the highest idea; that is the greatest help we can give her.

Remember, Ujjie, "We must be lions," Turiyananda used to say, "and break the cage of *maya*." No spookiness—Mira this or Mira that. We know only Mira, Mother's child, that great soul trying to express her divine nature. Mother brought us together, She has separated us, but in spirit we are one always. Realize it. Be strong and fearless and all will be well.

Mayavati, November 4, 1916

Our Souls Are Anchored Elsewhere

I was amused at your little psychic experience. You know I am awfully skeptical about such things. But I like to hear about them, so write always whatever comes your way. *But do not try for it.* Our problem is not life and death, but beyond

both. But as long as our mind has to rest on something, let it rest on the highest. Therefore I try to think of Mira with Ramakrishna. That also takes away the sting of separation.

Once Mira said, "Gurudasa, let the one who goes first manifest himself to the one who is left behind at the death of either of us." I answered: "Mira, for heaven's sake, do not appear to me. I shall be frightened to death. And besides I would not believe that apparition is you anyhow. I would take it to be some imitating ghost or a phenomenon of my subconscious mind." Of course, it was all in joke.

Mira has done her share on earth, now let her rest and enjoy where she is. And I hope that she will never have to come back to this hell again. May she reach the goal from where she is. Holy Mother told me that Nivedita would not have to come back. So why not hope the best for dear Mira also.

By God, Ujjie, our meeting place must be in Ramakrishna, not on this earth. I told Mira so many times. Our earthly relationship was just a little surface play. Our souls are anchored elsewhere. Be sure of that.

Mayavati, March 10, 1917

On Dhira

The Pillars Are Being Removed

[A "pillar of strength" is an apt expression for Dhira, about whom Ujjvala wrote to Gurudas Maharaj in an unpublished letter, dated February 22, 1915: "She is absolutely fearless. She went back to the Temple the night of the tragedy (the bombing) and has stayed right there, much of the time alone. She is willing to make any sacrifice almost, and has hardly a thought in her mind outside of the work."

Dhira had the temple repaired from the bombing and, in Ujjvala's words, "had cleaned and freshened everything, and things were more simple and harmonious than they had ever been."

Ujjvala further elaborated Dhira's pillar-strength when, in her unpublished notes, she described the details around Swami Trigunatita's passing:

"For ten days he (Swami Trigunatita) was in a hospital, served by his monks and visited daily by Dhira who did her best to carry out his wishes until his successor should be appointed. She had devoted her life to his service, acting as his Secretary and at the same time performing her household duties in the flat on the second floor of the Temple. Whenever he wanted her he would ring three bells, and she would drop everything and go to his office on the ground floor. Some time later when she left this world suddenly while dressing to attend the Sunday morning lecture, someone said of her, 'She heard three bells and answered immediately.'"]

A letter from S.N. [Satya-Nishtha], dated Dec. 25th, came by the same mail, and it brought me the first news of Dhira's death. I expect to hear more soon. Poor Dhira—or lucky Dhira—who knows! I was calculating that she and I would be much in the Ashrama together, should I return. But every calculation goes for nought.

In Dhira, the Vedanta movement has lost a strong personality, a worker, and a fighter. As things were going, it seems to me that the loss is greater for the Ashrama than for the Society. She had great plans for the Ashrama—to build a new meditation room. Who will take interest now? And the place needs overhauling pretty badly, I suppose. Nothing has been done for years. The danger for the Vedanta Society is that with Dhira gone, things will slacken and lose their life—just jogging along some way or other. But again, who knows! I give up prophesying, for every thing and every person turns out differently than what I expected. Perhaps the other party, having freer play, will show what they can do, and the work may pick up instead of dropping down.

But it seems strange to think of the temple and the S.F. work without Dhira. There was something so nice, simple, and genuine about Dhira. And then, her faith and enthusiasm! The pillars are being removed one by one, it seems. It will be

awfully lonesome for Nirmala. Perhaps it would be nice for him if he could take up the Ashrama and throw himself heart and soul into that work—the improvement of the place. *But I have nothing to suggest*. He will know best himself. Dhira did not get my last letter, as I wrote it on Dec. 25th.

I cannot say that Dhira's death makes any change in my plans, for I have no plans. And though it was she who so strongly urged me to come back and take charge of the Ashrama, I am sure that I can go there anytime with Swami Prakashananda's permission. But, of course, there is another link snapped. The old order of things has changed altogether. With Mira gone in the city work and Dhira in the Ashrama work, I shall now have to stand all alone. Who is there to take their place? As I once wrote to Mira, "If I go to the Ashrama, Dhira will probably also live there a great deal. And I am sure we will get along nicely for Dhira could take the lead, and that is just exactly what I would like." I must have alongside of me some person who has some life and enthusiasm and vitality. I cannot live with half-dead, half-asleep people. Narrow-minded, precise people kill my spirits, no matter how virtuous they may be.

Mayavati, February 11, 1917

The Appearance Is Gone

I think you must miss Dhira a good deal, especially since you live at the temple. Where are they now in the scheme of things? Who knows? Perhaps not as far away from you as I am. Truth is so terrible on the one hand, and such a blessing on the other. The appearance is gone. That is all we can say about it. But the real Mira and the real Dhira are very, very close to every one of us.

The sword of discrimination cuts clean. But, my God, who has the courage to wield it? And Ramakrishna had to cut down even the mental image of his all-blissful Divine Mother before he could reach *nirvikalpa samadhi*. We can only pray, "Thou art the Helmsman, take us to the other shore of *maya*." We try to go alone by our own effort, but we take hold of so many logs floating by, which turn out to be crocodiles. So let us try to resign ourselves, but always remember that

Ramakrishna is our Lord. And he (if we can grasp it) is the indwelling Spirit of each of us, far and near, with form and without form, the final resting.

Herbert seems to be getting on nicely with his work. There is so much need for doctors here. Imagine, Mira would have finished her course [medical school] a year from now. It seems such a shame. But she is probably much happier where she is. We *will* judge things from our limited standpoint, won't we?

Mayavati, April 10, 1917

Meditation on Death

A Spark of the Great Light

The rains are over and we are having the first touch of autumn weather—delightful sunshine, the air clear and crisp, and the mountains stand out in all their glory and majesty, the forest filled with fragrance and the song of birds and wild creatures—a paradise on earth. What a joy it would be to have you here during this weather. April and October are the best months here, like in our Shanti Ashrama. But the walks are all up and down and the roads, bad. But I love to climb through the forest and to look over the hills and valley towards the snows. It gives a feeling of freedom.

How often I have thought, Mira must see this place when she comes to India. But that was not to be. Perhaps, she is enjoying scenes and conditions which make this poor earth, even at its best, look like a murky place. I hope so. Anyhow, had she lived, she would likely have gone off to France as nurse and doctor. Dear Mira, I love to think of her as somewhere near Ramakrishna. And Dhira and Swami Trigunatita and Frank A. [Alexander]—I imagine them all there somehow. Grandma [see the section "On Mutie" in this chapter], I cannot place very well. But somehow or other, I think of her also near Mira. And then when our time comes, we will also find our humble place there. And we will, perhaps, smile at all our foolishness here. Anyhow, let us think so without doubting. That is the best way to get there.

Ask all the friends to remember this and to drive away all doubt about it—to meditate on it, to meditate on it as if it were already an accomplished fact. Let us enjoy it during our meditations, carry the thought with us all day, and then it must come true. Remember, good or bad, we *are* Mother's children. There is no way getting away from that. And She wants us to come to Her, every one of us.

The trouble is we make Ramakrishna too human. We forget that he was the incarnation of the Mother, now shining in his own divine glory, diffusing everywhere, illumining everything, and forming the very core of our consciousness. Divesting ourselves of self, that blissful consciousness remains—a spark of the great Light—just our real Self as consciousness, floating in that celestial, ethereal Light. And that little spark of light, always wanting to be near and to merge in the great Sun.

What is creation but Her projection: Her consciousness spreading out and being enveloped by different *upadhis* [limitations]—our ego or personality. In meditation we must go to the center of our being, to that spark—throwing off everything that envelops it, rejecting every thought but this one thought: I am that spark of light, floating in that consciousness which is the Mother and which took a perfect form here on earth as Ramakrishna. Ramakrishna may still have a form—a form of light and bliss. And we as light—all-conscious—play near and about that divine blissful form. There our past is forgotten—we are all His own, playing, dancing in His presence.

Of course, I do not want to disturb your own line of thinking, but I find this a nice meditation and as near to truth as I can imagine it. Otherwise, if we make him too human, I think, "Oh, he would not like me," "I am not advanced enough," and all that nonsense. Does He care for all that? Just *go* there, *be* that spark, and see the effect. It is freedom. And we really are that spark of consciousness. The rest is all dream and humbug. It is all a lie. Mother alone is real and true and the only Existence. We are Her dream-creatures; and if we want to wake up, we will find that the real "I" is Herself, just as all my dream-creatures are myself. If all my dream-creatures should wake up, they would all flow into my own consciousness. They would all lose their ego and personality and find themselves

united in me. But they must first become conscious of the fact that they are really projections of my consciousness, before fully waking up. That would be the state of the *jnani* still in the body—the *jivanmukta*. There would then be still separation, but they would know that they are my creation, my children. And that is our aim now—to know that we are Mother's children, that every creature is Mother's child, and the consciousness in us is She Herself. And that consciousness we are. That alone is real in us. And that consciousness is dreaming this world and that world and identifying itself with the dream. It never really changes—it is always our perfect, blissful Self. So we really belong to the Mother, as the image belongs to the sun. The sun does not ask, "Is the image good or bad?" It is its own; it belongs to it. So are we Mother's own; we belong to Her. She does not ask, good or bad. She simply wants us to realize that we are Her own.

This, I think, is a very important point to remember. It is so with human beings. Some never could come close to Swami Turiyananda because they imagined that he did not like them. They themselves made the barrier by thinking so. But those who thought him their own came close to him. Don't you see that? A mother cares not whether her child is good or bad. It is her own. Mother-love is not affected by that. We are Mother's creation. She made us—some good, some bad. But we are all Hers, and She is longing for every one of us to come and love Her as our Mother. But I would not make it too human. Like attracts like. We, as soul, are attracted by the Mother Soul. Light loves light; the spark longs to go back to the fire. Not Gurudasa, but that divine spark—the true consciousness of Gurudasa—belongs to Mother, is part of Her Self. So we may think of ourselves as soul, a spark of the great Fire, playing around that Fire.

Mayavati, September 24, 1918

We Are Mother's Children

You say you still cling to life. We all do that. Only a few days ago this idea occupied my mind. Then it came to me that by giving a little twist to our mind we can even wish for death. You remember what Mira told you: "I am tired of life, I like

the idea of a change"? We can make death an object of positive longing, just a desire for a new venture. We are Sri Ramakrishna's children. Nothing can alter that. We have been bitten by the cobra. There is no escape from him. "Good or bad, we are Mother's children." You remember, that was Swami Turiyananda's often repeated saying. We may kick about within his circle, but we cannot get out of his circle, however we may try. We are caught in his current. He will never let us go. This is my positive conviction.

And when I think of our departed friends Chintasati, Shankari, and the whole list up to Mira and dear Frank, I see them all within that circle. The outer rim may not be so bright. But it is a whirlpool that finally draws everyone towards the Center, towards that Center of Light where all struggle ends and there is perfect bliss.

Poor Chetana may now deny Vedanta, the swamis, and Sri Ramakrishna himself. She may curse it all. But she is also within the circle. She can never get out, try as she may. Mother looks on and smiles: "Be as wayward as you please; you are Mine. The time will come when you will run into my arms. I can never give you up, no matter how you curse me."

You know what Swamiji told Nivedita: "The tusks of the elephant grow out, they cannot turn back. Thus it is with friendship. Once I have taken you up, I can never let you go." And though their relationship became extremely trying, Swamiji's words remain true forever. On the surface, for some time it was all misunderstanding, scolding, resentment, struggle. But underneath was the tie that can never be severed. We *are* His for all eternity.

Gopika, Agnes [Rhodehamel], the girls [Fox sisters], you, Haridas, myself—we are all tied to Him. We may be playing at the end of a long rope. But with time, the rope is sure to shorten, sure to draw us close and ever closer to Him. Sometimes we lose sight and knowledge of our friends. And then unexpectedly they appear again. So it is with Mother. She may seem ever so far away. But unexpectedly sometime we will meet Her again. Sri Ramakrishna said of some people who seemed to have utterly strayed away, "They will see me at the moment of their death."

Almora, June 22, 1925

On Rebecca Fox

A Greater Freedom

[Swami Madhavananda was head of the Vedanta Society in San Francisco from June 1927, till June 1929. Later he became the general secretary and president of the Ramakrishna Order.]

Sarah cabled to the Math, and they wrote to me. That is how I heard of Rebecca's death. Now Gopi writes, but she is not very good for giving details. I have to fill in by guessing. However, she did write that Sarah chanted and Rebecca was conscious of it just before she passed away. Also that Madhavananda spoke nicely. Whether she saw Rebecca, I don't know. It seems not. The funeral must have been very simple —not a word about music or singing. Only Madhavananda spoke at the house. It is good Rebecca was saved further suffering. It must be terrible not to be able in any way to express one's needs and wishes.

And now? Peace, I am sure. Glad that it is all over. A greater freedom, and probably much more than all this. What an emptiness it must make in Sarah's life. But again, who knows? It may be filled up with something deeper. Life is a mystery; we are not sure of anything, cannot predict anything, are usually wrong in our judgment of others, cannot believe anything (not even our own senses), cannot disbelieve anything. *Maya* indeed! But there is a way out, a path leading beyond *maya*. This is our consolation. I seem to be looking at life in a more impersonal way. The faults of others do not distress me at all.

Almora, March 29, 1928

On Prashanta

The Ideal End

Well, our Prashanta is out of it all. As long as his time has come, I am sure the end was just what he would have most desired—I mean his surroundings. It was ideal from a *sadhu* standpoint—his last years spent in holy places with other

sadhus, and his body merged in the Ganges. He seems to have been in a nice state of mind and conscious to the last. So we can hope the best for him.

Binsar, October 21, 1930

On Gopi

Missing Her

Your air mail letter made record time—exactly two weeks. Sarah has been so good, sending me two air mail letters and an ordinary letter about the funeral services [Gopi's funeral]. But about what Gopi talked about, I don't know anything, except that you write that she told Miss A. that the end might be near, and that the end came quietly. Probably when she realized it, she was too weak to care. Of course, we don't know what goes on in the mind when there is no external consciousness, anymore than what goes on in the mind (dreams) of a sleeping person. We can only trust that all is well with her now.

Three things stood out in her letters for the last six months; that she felt she was getting older and couldn't keep up much longer working so hard, that she firmly believed that whatever happens is unavoidable, that her love and faith and devotion for Thakur were increasing. Considering everything, she has had a wonderful life. She saw Swamiji, she nursed Swami Turiyananda, she was at the Shanti Ashrama, she remained true to her ideals, bravely she met her *karma*. She was, as Herbert says, a good scout, a loyal friend. I had great admiration for her, and I feel blessed to have known her so long. Now she has gone ahead, and I try to think about her being safely held in peace and rest, free from all anxiety and looking upon her life here as a dream that was, enjoying a marvelous freedom and understanding, and knowing that we will follow when our *karma* is ended.

Once Swami Turiyananda said to me, "When I write to any of you, it is just as if you were right near me." I always felt that way when I wrote my weekly letters—as if Gopi had stepped in from next door, and I was chatting with her. I don't feel

distance in space. I feel as if you are all close near me. That is, perhaps, why I miss her so much. But now the idea of distance has impinged itself on my mind. And this is *maya*, my own creation. In another attitude of mind, she is closer than ever—when we can see ourselves and her in that ocean of infinite bliss which is Ramakrishna. He is our refuge. In him alone can we find real peace. All else is foolishness. That is the truth. And if by Thakur's grace we can hold that thought, we get rid of that terrible thought of missing her—as if a prop is removed from under us. It will be good for ourselves and for her. Let that be our prayer.

Almora, May 2, 1937

We had our feast for the *sadhus* in memory of Gopi. Some *bhaktas* also were invited, so we were about twenty-five persons. Miss Alter sent me a check for the money I had left with Gopi. We are still a big party here, though some have left for Kailash.

Almora, June 26, 1937

On Mutie

A Shloka

It is an inspiration to read your letter about Mutie's passing away so easily and painlessly after a happy old age filled with spiritual consolation, and the family so sensible and strong. They will miss her, but what a consolation to know that they had given her their love and devotion when she needed it most. I have great admiration for Grete and Herbert. I remember how happy and comfortable they made Grandma—dear, old Grandma, who used to spend much of her time happily with her rosary.

A few days ago I came across a *shloka* in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. I wonder if you know it.

As a caterpillar, after having reached the end of a blade of grass and after having made another approach to another

blade, draws itself together towards it, thus does the transmigrating self, after having thrown off this body and after making another approach to another (subtle) body, draw itself together towards it. And as a goldsmith, taking a piece of gold, turns it into another, newer and more beautiful shape, so does this self, after having thrown off this body, make unto itself another, newer and more beautiful body. (IV. 4: 3-4)

You know, most of the time when I think of death and our friends who have gone, I get a feeling of exaltation. In Gopi's case, a feeling of loss (self-pity) was more persistent. My mind, perhaps, is less resilient than it used to be—more easily depressed. But I know it is only the mind, not the real I. I remember in the Shanti Ashrama when sometimes three or four would leave at a time, and I would be left alone, I would feel loneliness come over me. Then I used to go to the meditation room, and in no time I would snap out of it and enjoy my solitude. And I would remember Shankaracharya's saying, "True and blessed solitude is the realization of the One without a second, the Atman ever free."

Almora, August 8, 1937

On Haridas

At Perfect Peace

[Ujjvala's bond with Haridas was not only that of a fellow Shanti-ashramite, but also that of a brotherly benefactor and companion at a time when Ujjvala's crippled condition made her somewhat of a dependent. In her unpublished notes, Ujjvala described Haridas's background. She wrote:

"Haridas came about 1910 to ask his (Swami Trigunatita's) advice about going to India. He had been associated with some of the disciples of Baba Bharati in Los Angeles, and at the same time had discovered Swamiji's Raja Yoga *in the Public Library. One of the Baba's disciples, an elderly lady, had attended the Parliament of Religions in Chicago*

(in 1893) and had been deeply impressed by Swamiji's discourses there. Between this lady and Swamiji's books, Haridas had a yearning to practice breathing and meditation. Inspired by Swamiji's promise 'If you practice hard you can become a perfect Yogi in six months,' he devoted every moment when he was not working, and sometimes when he had a little money accumulated, would give up his position and practice 18 hours a day. Such intense effort was not without results, and he keenly felt the need of guidance. For that purpose he saved his money to go to India, and hearing that there was a Vedanta center in San Francisco, he went there to ask advice. Swami Tr. (Trigunatita) was very busy at the time and told him, 'I can give you ten minutes.' Two hours later they were still talking and Swami's final advice was, 'Stay here until next year when I am going to India and I will take you with me.' Then Swami put him in charge of the Monastery at Concord. There he was useful in many ways, doing the cooking, helping in the garden, serving Swami when he went to Concord on Friday of each week, returning Saturday afternoon for his Sunday lecture."]

You know, when Mira died, close friends though we were, I did not sorrow much. I could in those days remove from my mind all thought of her in the worldly sense by holding the thought that she was free, somehow, somewhere in a subtle sphere of light and blessedness. So I did not keep even her photo, or anything connected with her worldly life. Of course, your condition is altogether different. Still, I think it might help you if you try to meditate on Haridas in the same way. I imagine him free from all worldly concern, at perfect peace, with only one thought: "I am." And if he should still remember this world, it will be in wonder how he could ever dream this dream of life. You see, thus we raise ourselves to his plane instead of pulling him down to our world plane.

There is another thing. I find that people are happy if they can do something for others. But often we spoil their fun by not accepting it wholeheartedly, without fuss. Swami Turiyananda used to say, "You people know how to give, but not how to accept." In India they don't even like you to say "Thank you." So whatever kindness is shown, you accept it in

grace, without protesting, excuses, and whatnot. You need a certain amount of help, as I do, and we may as well accept it gratefully but quietly. All this talk of "I am a burden, I am so sorry" is all nonsense spoiling the fun. At least it is so here.

Kankhal, December 7, 1948

On Sarah Fox

The Last of the Fox Sisters

I have written to the swamis here, with whom I knew Sarah was in correspondence. Swami Pavitrananda replied, "Sarah Fox wrote to me about three months ago. She was so devotional. I am sure her life and example will be a source of inspiration to others." And Swami Atmabodhananda writes, "Only the other day Miss Shaver wrote to me about the accident. So the last of the Fox sisters is gone. I remember her well from the days she and Rebecca were at Mayavati. How devoted she was! Any talk about Sri Ramakrishna would bring tears to her eyes." Boshi also knew her, and so did Sw. Virajananda. One Christmas they were at Kankhal and they were some time at Benares.

Barlowganj, April 15, 1949

22

VEDANTA FOR EAST AND WEST

"For One's Own Salvation and the Good of All"

As I am sitting here on the veranda with the Himalayas in full view, I cannot but wish that you could be with me and enjoy the magnificent view. It is really unique and it baffles all description. No imagination, however lofty, can give an idea of the beauty of these gigantic snowy peaks. One glance at Nanda Devi, Trishul, or the five Pandavas repays for all the trouble of a journey to India. And that is only one phase of India's loveliness.

I really have to thank circumstances that drove me back to this holy and blessed land. Mother's ways are incomprehensible, because we judge everything from our limited viewpoint. I am quite convinced that those who cling to Her will never come to grief. Isn't it a pity that we become so involved in little things and personal questions! The ancient *rishi* understood it when he chanted, "That which is universal is Blissfulness Itself. There is no blissfulness in that which is little." Nature is sublime and life becomes a constant joy when we draw away from the little and plunge into the ocean of Existence and Bliss. To get away from self and to enter into that Consciousness which is our Mother is blessedness, indeed.

That is India's message and the rest is only an attempt to bring home this divine Truth.

"I will tell you in half a *shloka*," says Shankara, "what has been said in millions of volumes: Brahman alone is real; the world is illusion, and the soul is none other than Brahman." We fight and we quarrel, we denounce, and we try to force our own ideas, and for what? For a miserable handful of straw to feed the beast within us. And the Mother within us we forget and neglect in the struggle. I think it was Eckhart who said, "God speaks to every being: I have become man for you, now you must become God for me." What a noble mission our life becomes when we try to bring that to pass. What a blessing we will be to ourselves and to others when that becomes the aim of our lives.

I sometimes think of all that has been going on in S.F. since I had the good fortune to board the *China* last December, and what a joke it all seems when one is so far removed from it. What a dream! And how intensely real, how terrible it all becomes when we are part of the dream. What passions are let loose, what mental pain and struggle, what churning to become triumphant, to free things in the narrow channels mapped out by our egotistic and little minds. Really, we ourselves make this earth a heaven or a hell. It is good to stand aside and look on for a while—a disinterested witness. Let come what will. Mother will triumph after all.

"By Me have all these heroes been slain already, O Arjuna. Be thou only the outward cause." Who slays and who is slain? A little personality is removed from the world-stage for a while—that is all. We will also be slain before very long—be it by the hand of man or God or a violent or lingering disease—in whatever form the death-blow may come. Our little personality will also be hidden for a while, and the world will never miss us in the least—no more than when an ant is trodden under foot. Isn't it a joke, indeed? The Mother looks on and smiles. She draws us out of the mire and She puts us on dry land for a while in the lovely sunshine, and we struggle and fight to be left where we are in the mudhole of a world. Be sure of it, we reap what we sow. No hand of man or God can harm us. We are our own executioners. And it is all to lift

us higher. There is no going backward, it is all one march toward the Mother.

So I do not feel anxious about what has happened or what may happen. Let those fight who want to fight. I am the Witness for a little while at least. I do not wish to take part in the fight or to try to direct it. May everyone get his desired end, and may the end be noble and pure. "For one's own salvation and for the good of all"—this should always be our motto. That was the message of our leader. And we must try to stand by his banner. His message is a world-message, not a society-message or a man-message. Swamiji is our guide, our general. And under his banner alone do we wish to fight, only in so far as we mirror the devotion of the pilgrims. One cannot help being carried on that stream of enthusiasm. It is good to be part of it once again.

Mayavati, June 28, 1915

Talk Is Cheap; Where Is the Life?

[Frank Alexander is the author of the book In the Hours of Meditation.*]*

I hope Frank A. [Alexander] will soon be made to understand that America wants *men* and not sentimental, temperamental babies. He is weeping and wailing for India! What has India done for him? Has it made of him a *man* or a weakling? Has it made of him a "roaring lion of Vedanta" or a cheap imitation *bhakta*? What has he to show for his five years in India? Let people ask themselves these questions before they encourage his nonsense. Has he developed the character of the average Westerner? If not, let him bow down before the West and let him not denounce it. Is he able to meet and keep his own ground with our bright, young minds in the West? If not, let him stop calling them boors. It would not do to brush all this aside and say, That has nothing to do with spirituality. What is spirituality if not based on character and manliness? Gopika goes so far as to write to me, "You can imagine how difficult it is for a boy like Frank to live in the West." What does she mean? Is Frank so spiritual that he cannot stand the materialism of the West? Is he more spiritual than Walt

Whitman, Emerson, and our Western saints? Shame on you people! Have you lost all common sense? Be kind to Frank, help him, but do not allow yourself to be humbugged. If India has done such wonders for him, let him show it. Talk is cheap, where is the life? By the fruit we must judge the tree.

I also love India, but my love is not at the expense of the West. I love and admire both countries, each for its own great qualities—character, efficiency, manliness on the one side, and discrimination between the real and the unreal on the other. We have to accept both. The way in which Frank has behaved so far is certainly a poor advertisement for India. Loyalty for a country should express itself in our life, not in words alone. Let him preach the glad tidings India offers, and let him stop his selfish weeping and moaning. Make use of this as you see fit.

Mayavati, August 2, 1916

American Rajas

I am living such a quiet, uneventful life now in the jungle that there is not much to write, and you will understand if I do not write often. How different from being in America where everything must be more *rajasic* than ever. But I would have liked that. I longed for that: life and activity and efficiency—up and doing. It is just what I would have liked now—at least, for a time. Well, let us see.

Mayavati, June 17, 1918

Different Standpoints

I love the Hindus, though their ways are often trying to us Westerners. And I begin to see that, in many ways, they are right, where at first it seemed that we were ahead of them. They certainly take life easier than we do. Our rush and push is to them ridiculous. "What is it all for?" they ask. Only because you have so many desires, do you have to rush through life to satisfy them, forgetting the real aim of life—namely, to get free from all world-bondage. And what seems to us to be their laziness is really not that, for intellectually they are never lazy. It is simply looking at life from a

different standpoint. But they need to be a little more practical in an age of competition and struggle for bread.

Mayavati, September 24, 1918

Making the Best of Our Circumstances

[In this letter extract, Gurudas Maharaj mentions Radhika and Sarah Fox who, along with Swami Prakashananda, travelled to India with him in December 1922. "The girls," inspired by the Mission work they saw, decided to remain in India and serve at the Nivedita Girls' School, in Calcutta till, perhaps, January 1926, when Swami Saradananda, who was then general secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission, finally gave them permission to return to America.]

It may be true what you say about Haridas—that he, perhaps, would have been in India had you not been with him. But I doubt more and more whether he would have been happier for that. If it is Mother's will he, of course, will visit India some time. But I fear it will be a terrible disappointment to him. Almost everyone seems to come to the conclusion that whatever we want to do in spiritual life, we can do better at home than here. I used to say that. And the girls [the Fox sisters] are of that opinion now. Personally, I don't believe it is a question of one country or another. It is a question of making the best of our circumstances.

We look back to the past, to our younger days of vigor and enthusiasm, when we forced our own conditions and surroundings, and we forget that with that enthusiasm we overcame all obstacles, and whatever success we had was due entirely to our own efforts and not to the country we happened to be in. Demand brings the supply. Every strong desire must be fulfilled. In our younger days we wanted God, not this or that place. Now we are looking for places. And as no place is perfect, we want to change wherever we may be. Swami Turiyananda said to me once in the Ashrama, "Whatever you want to do in India, do that here."

Our Italian friend is at his religious practices at the Math twelve hours out of the twenty-four. If he were in the Shanti Ashrama, he would do the same and with the same results.

That is the whole secret. We don't practice as we used to do. We have become lukewarm. We allow persons and circumstances to interfere, whereas we would not have allowed these to stand in our way when we were burning with the desire to know God. We have all kinds of imaginary duties and obligations (I am not speaking of real ones), which in our earlier days we would have kicked away.

That is what keeps the girls from having the opportunities they could have had here today. And that also will keep them from getting or accepting the opportunities that America offers when they go home. They want to be nice and to please everyone—to be conventional. And everything goes wrong. It is not India. It is they themselves. And it will not be America, but they themselves that stand in their own way. The opportunity beckons, but they do not accept it. So they are having a miserable time. I am speaking, of course, only of those conditions over which we can have control and about self-created obstacles which can be avoided. Sickness, loss of money, mental conditions, certain duties and obligations are beyond our control. Life is *maya*. Mother alone knows. She alone can save us.

Radhika is a person whose physical condition depends on her mental state. Being mentally miserable she is physically miserable. Her heart is acting up, and now she suffers from neuralgia in the head. Sarah is also far from well. So it is not all sunshine here either.

There is a kind of loyalty to friends that says, "Don't mention these things to others. Let others believe that we are happy and that we are having a glorious time." It is not my idea. I think you should know the truth. The first year was glorious. To leave you under the impression that it is so still, I consider treacherous. I hold that among friends there should be no secrets, no deceiving. I do not blame India. I see only too well that the fault lies in ourselves—on my own part, lack of patience and irritation; on their part, committing folly after folly, insisting on doing what must turn out to be disastrous. And on top of that, all the conditions they used as an excuse for cancelling their passage six months ago have become worse. They are not in a better mental and physical state now than they were then. The money value has gone more against

them than it was. I still hope, however, that all this may correct itself when the time comes and they will have to go. Their sister is now also in a condition (bad knee) that she needs them home.

From all this, and now, alas, your own condition, you will understand that my only bright hope for the future (of having you all here some day in an ashrama of our own) has utterly vanished. And I realize more and more the truth of what I wrote you in a previous letter, namely, that to start any such place in America would turn out unsatisfactorily. It is difficult enough for two persons to live together in peace—what to speak of a bunch, especially if there are no outside interests to keep each one busy and to take the mind away from immediate surroundings.

Almora, June 22, 1925

The Occidental and the Oriental Mind

It is not every day one can get hold of handwriting of Hindus in India; and I thought it would be so interesting to Mrs. Kahlert to get them. It is true—the value lies in having the mistakes pointed out. You had the girls do that, whereas my criticism would have come after three months when she would have forgotten all about them, unless she keeps records. Then the analyses puzzled me. They seemed so very incorrect. I hardly knew what to say about them. But the girls thought them to be all right—so there you are! What does anybody know about anybody else? What does our judgment amount to?

But there is another interesting side to the question. You know the saying, "The Occidental mind cannot understand the Oriental mind." There is a great deal of truth in this. One is constantly puzzled at the Hindu mind. This is due to different ideals (national), tradition, and training. Moral standards (moral, in its broadest sense) are absolutely different. Etiquette, customs—everything is different here, even superstitions. This leads to constant misunderstanding. One cannot judge a person here by Western standards. Now, the interesting question is, does this hold true also in their handwriting? You cannot judge them from a Western standpoint by either

their actions or their speech. Then how are you going to judge them? Only by Indian standards. Unless you know these standards it is hopeless. They have different motives, different practices, *and* a different outlook on life. So what puzzles us in contact may very well puzzle in the evaluation through handwriting. If I am right in thinking Mrs. K. incorrect, it would almost seem so. In other words, that for examining their handwriting, different rules would have to be applied.

Almora, August 30, 1927

What India and America Have to Give

I have a suspicion that all this effort on the part of Christian denominations to combine is mostly an attempt to hold back Eastern influence. Certainly India stands alone and supreme in religious matters. Read Swamiji and then look at your Western psychology and religion. It is baby's play. Christianity can be stuck in one of the endless pigeonholes of Indian thought, one of the many dualistic religions of India with Jesus as the *avatar*. Only it is not so well worked out as the *bhakti* paths in Indian scriptures. No, we have gotten something the West could not give us. But that is all India has—her religion. Everything else must come from the West. It is not here. We from the West have both sides open to us, while the Hindus are limited to one aspect of life. We are wonderfully privileged. For religion, I go to India; for everything else, to the West. Together they make a wonderful whole. But they will never mix. Impossible. There is no perfection in any country. Each country can hold only one part of the game, just as each individual, to be really successful, has to choose one side or the other. What we are doing is, as Swamiji said, only sowing wild oats. Our liberality is lukewarmness, mediocrity. Compare Ramakrishna's "all paths lead to God" with the Western schoolboys' "all religions are true." The same words, but what a difference of realization behind these words! What a pity that we can still be satisfied with the pebbles of religion after having seen the real gems.

Boshi writes that what he does not like in Western scientists is that they work but do not talk. To the Hindu, everything is play. Seriousness must be set off with lightheartedness. They

must have their fun—work and play, but mostly play. You find that in *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. On almost every page you find laughter. It does not take much to make them laugh. Religion is a joyous business with them. Cheerfulness is considered a necessary state of mind in all undertakings, but not levity. Ramakrishna's jokes were all to illustrate some point or to bring out others or to make them feel at ease. It was not a case of simply telling jokes, Pullman-car fashion.

Almora, July 15, 1928

An Attitude of Tolerance

Human nature may be the same everywhere, but its expression is certainly not the same. Ethical standards, for one thing, are different. Hindus approve of things that we condemn, and the reverse. Then, India is a land of leisure, while America is a land of rush; so we get irritated at their unspeakable slowness and incompetency. The nearest East and West can come is an attitude of tolerance.

And now I enjoy watching life, looking on. I love nature, beauty, young life and animals, and my books (which are like looking on life). Therefore I love biography. I looked on as *Little Caesar* went through his hectic career or *Billy the Kid* or *Jews Without Money* or *Count Luckman* or the gunman who was the ace of aces during the war. I think my liking for active life in books is a reaction from the deadly slowness in India that surrounds me. I remember how I revelled in the activity and accomplishment of America when I returned from India. And still, the call of the East asserted itself again. My place now is here; being no more active myself—no more able to take part in Western activity—India suits me. It is just as well to spend the latter part of one's life as the Witness, if one can do it.

I see little sense in trying to get an M.A. degree at the age of seventy. I admire it as a *tour de force*, but that is all. I would rather spend my time studying life, trying to see what it is all about, solving the riddle of existence, trying to get at the root of things, trying to know the Atman, our own immortal Soul. "Know the Atman alone and give up all idle talk," which includes idle activity. And India is the place for that. Here this

is understood and appreciated. But that is the last stage of life. You remember, first student life, then householder's life, and finally retirement—"when one has seen one's children's children." That was the old rule.

Well, Ujjie, we are all going on, each one in his own way, according to past *karma*. But in the end we will all be merged in the ocean of Satchidananda, where we will dream no more dreams, satisfied forever.

Almora, February 3, 1931

America and India

America is marvelous. Depression or no depression, cities spring up as if by magic. It is this vitality—this will to live and do—that one misses in India. As Dr. Boike says, "India is a land of old people" (who are through with life)— or "for young people who are through knowing it to be *maya*," I would say.

Almora, August 27, 1935

23

REFLECTIONS WITHOUT A COUNTRY

The Hand on the Plow

From Swami [Turiyananda], no news so far. Is it not a long time? To me it seems as if Swami left a long, long time ago. Well, it is not strange. In the Ashrama feelings seem to intensify, and the mind is assailed by many foes. I know the object of life; I have laid the hand on the plow, and with Mother's grace, I will not look backward.

Shanti Ashrama, August 22, 1902

On Duty

I am not coming to the city now. It is so kind of you all to invite me, but I cannot conscientiously leave the Ashrama now and, furthermore, have little desire to do so. You see, I am the slave of duty—self-imposed or not, I do not know. But at the same time, I consider it a privilege and thank Mother for so kindly keeping me here.

Shanti Ashrama, May 5, 1903

On Time

It is a year since Swamiji passed away. It seems much longer to me. So much can happen in a year. May it only bring us nearer to the Divine Mother. Time goes by, and what are we doing?

Shanti Ashrama, July 4, 1903

This Life

Your examination will probably be just over when you receive this. I hope that you have been very successful. You will please inform me at once as to the outcome of it. And now you will have a little more time for reflection, isn't it so? And I hope you will take a little rest. I have seen so little of you while in the city, but that was perhaps just as well. But may the Divine Mother grant that we may still meet and that we may be helpful to each other in understanding this so complicated and confusing life.

Shanti Ashrama, April 4, 1905

I believe it to be perfectly true that one keeps his youth by having an interest in life, provided that interest is of a *sattvic* nature, as a *rajasic* temperament spends too much energy in the attempt. And it is also true that food has a great deal to do with it. We neglect the laws of health so shamefully and then wonder why we suffer. Of course, the suffering usually comes long after, and we remain reckless until the symptoms appear, and, of course, it is often too late to much matter.

Mayavati, June 28, 1911

When There Is No Love

By the way, did you ever write to Swami [Turiyananda]? He does not mention any letter from you. Is it possible that after all that fuss—taking down names, etc.—you have not written to him? That is a shame. You have all become hard-hearted, no feeling. Things are done from the brain and there is little of that even. That should not be. Remember, when there is no love, that is a sure sign that we have wandered far

from Mother. If we can throw off our old friends like a dirty rag, that is not good.

Shanti Ashrama, August 28, 1913

"Not I, Mother"

Of course, I do not want any ashrama of my own. I do not want to be a teacher. I hate the very thought—it gives me nausea. Let me just be as your brother, that is all. I have nothing to give. I feel like a burned-out crater. Here nobody expects anything from me. I am a nonentity. And that I like. I am not fit for any spiritual work now. I am so deadly afraid of people who expect anything from me, because they will be so disappointed. I would like to live somewhere, as John lives with Herbert. Well, Mother knows what will happen. Are we not simply instruments? "Not I, Mother, but Thou" must be our prayer. May She protect us.

Uttara Kashi, July 20, 1917

Mother's Children

Now you know about our (yours and mine) relationship; it is that of brother and sister, Mother's children. So you need not be afraid of misunderstanding or hurting me. When I know that a person loves me, then he cannot hurt me. Just do always what you consider right, and have no anxiety for the results. That is the only way to feel free and easy together. Love is a sure guide.

Uttara Kashi, July 20, 1917

The World Goes on

I left America with the intention of being in India two years, and that period is over. It is more than three years now. But it seems like twenty years to me. Our taking leave on the *China* seems long, long ago. Who could have dreamed that Swami Trigunatita, Mira, and Dhira would go before I returned —three such strong characters? But the world goes on the

same as ever. A few thousand more or less does not even seem to count.

Kankhal, April 14, 1918

A Sinking Sensation

There are two things in my earlier career that still give me a sinking sensation in the stomach whenever I think of them. One is examinations, the other job hunting. And now you are in for both. So I can sympathize with you.

Almora, July 10, 1924

Mother, Save Me

It is very kind of the many people in L.A. that they would like to see me. But excuse me (I know it is not very gracious), but I have no desire to see people. I have no brain now for that kind of thing, as I have explained in a previous letter. Physically and mentally I am not in the race anymore. I have always hated visiting, and I despise it now more than ever—going for lunch here and for dinner there and overnight somewhere else. Mother, save me from it. There is not a thing you mention that comes anywhere near tempting me, except that I would like to see our very small circle of friends.

Almora, September 26, 1924

On Merit

Well, I had no idea I could write so much. I must have spent all the "merit" I have acquired by not writing a word last week. I wonder if you will have to pay half of the spent merit! The books don't say so, so I think you are safe! You know, the Hindus always speak of acquiring merit through austerities. I hate that. But they firmly believe in it. And perhaps it is true. But if one, after the austerity, indulges in the same thing to excess, it is all lost.

So austerities are practiced with special objects in view—to get a certain power or whatnot. Among the masses, all worship is of that nature. If a child is sick or the crops look bad or

a cow goes dry, they make offerings at the temple or entertain *sannyasins* or kill a goat. Sri Ramakrishna often refers to that. He could not touch sweets brought to him by such persons. He would say, "They have come with desires." A merchant will visit a *sadhu* (monk) and give a present in the hope that his business will pick up. Don't think that all Hindus are Vedantists. There are very few. The majority never read the Gita once.

Almora, September 5, 1925

On Beauty

I have a lovely room, second storey alone, with a veranda running along the entire building. Here I used to sit and walk up and down. The view over the valley and then the mountains is charming. And it is so still and solitary here. A wonderful place for practice. Today I saw the girls [the Fox sisters] again at our class in their cottage. They seemed fairly well, but we did not talk much. I left after the class. We are reading the Ramayana still. Mrs. Cooke has gone home, so the girls will be more alone, for which they will be thankful. I hope they will pick up before they will sail for home this winter. The climate is lovely now, but the sun is hot in the mountains. I have not found it hot here at any time, but the girls' cottage is more sheltered and they feel the heat, though it has never been over 88 degrees—and that, only a few days ago with cool nights and a dry climate. The sunsets have been especially fine. The horizon looked like a mass of volcanic eruptions. And such colors!

Yes, Mrs. Kahlert [the handwriting analyst] is right. I love colors and beauty and rhythm. I *am* sensuous. I told Mrs. Sevier ages ago that it was my sensuous nature that was attracted to India, not my spiritual nature. That is with me something entirely independent of India or beauty. I love beauty, but it does not stir my spiritual nature in the least. It belongs to another department of my mind. There is no connection. Beauty has a soothing effect, gives me happiness. I am very sensitive to ugliness in any form. Dirt I can stand if it goes with beauty to compensate for it. Beauty fascinates me as

much as ugliness repels me. And in India I find that beauty. So the dirt does not annoy me as it does the girls.

As a whole the handwriting analysis is wonderfully correct. It would be interesting to have a reading of my handwriting of 25 years ago. For example, I think my mental horizon *was* narrow. I don't think it is so now. Also I don't consider myself psychic at all, in the ordinary sense. Whatever spiritual experiences I have had, I got through hard practice. But she uses the word in a higher sense, not meaning clairvoyance, spookiness, etc. I do see things clearly—situations, hidden motives in others, pretense, etc. So here again she is right. And, as regards religion, there is a great deal of the sensuous in the religious experience, especially the *shanti* experience. It soothes, is beautiful, peaceful, restful—a happy state, a state I desire through religion because I never found it in the world. So far she is right again. I want religion for the happiness it brings, or the peace or beauty. All these words mean the same in the *shanti* state. I have gone beyond that. But I never wanted Truth for Truth's sake, but because it brings happiness. I know true happiness consists in knowing myself, my Atman. I do not find happiness in the world. Therefore, I try to realize the Atman. And the *jnana* path appeals to me because that leads to Self-knowledge and seems most reasonable to me.

By the way, do you know that the Christian saints warn against the sensuous in religion? But we have to pass through it. It is only when we realize our Atman that we rise above sensuousness. Then it is pure bliss. That is super—or beyond ordinary sensuousness—just as knowing the Self is super, or beyond selfishness. It is an absolute state where ordinary feelings cease.

So, worldly beauty is one thing and spiritual beauty another. I do not confound the two. But in the end it is all beauty. Swami Turiyananda was appreciative of beauty. I saw that on our pilgrimages. He loved beautiful scenery. Still, he told me then, to my surprise, "I don't care for external beauty. I want the internal beauty." I understand it now, but did not then. He loved external beauty, but it did not suffice. He found another and greater beauty of the spiritual realm. I love beauty but it is just a fleeting sensation. Spiritual beauty (that comes with

spiritual realization) has a lasting effect. It changes the person for the better, while external beauty has not that effect on me. It leaves me as I am.

I would love to get Miss MacLeod's handwriting reading. She is such a character. She is in America (the East) now, and she writes to the girls.

Almora, September 5, 1925

Luxuries

It is very good to read your remark "It costs so little to live here," when in almost every magazine, articles appear complaining of the terrible cost of living. And these writers have, what I call, royal incomes. It all depends on the standard one sets up. How foolish we are to jack up such high standards. Luxuries have become necessities. One writer has a home in New York and one in the country which is necessary for the children. Private teachers, certified milk, specialists, etc.—all necessary for the children. And the whole nation chimes in and applauds. Expense of childbirth, one thousand dollars minimum charge! No wonder life is expensive. And it has its good side from a materialistic standpoint. Create new desires and struggle to get these satisfied—that is the law of progress. But more fortunate, I consider, are those whose desires don't require a constant struggle for ever more money.

Almora, March 24, 1926

Magazine Talk

Yes, the magazines are full now of religion and seeing truth in all sects and combining and making a successful go-getter out of Jesus. It is all nice. All religions are true; why bother? Health, wealth, and prosperity—that is religion.

I am getting a lot of fun out of the *American Mercury*. It is so clever! The June issue has an article on psychology, showing up what is done by the schools. One school offers sixty-two different kinds of psychology by correspondence. In six months, for $150, you get your Dr.'s degree. They advertise that already they have turned out 650 thousand successes, and America is honeycombed with schools of that kind. And they

are legal, if you please. That also will soon be called religion. So we are all becoming religious—the whole nation. Let us be happy.

Almora, July 15, 1928

What Made Him Great?

The letters make one curious to know more about H. Irving, whom Shah loathed and Ferry loved—a gigantic egotist, but able actor. What made him great as an actor? What makes people stand out above the crowd? Long, concentrated ambition to accomplish? I think so. And when that stimulates a certain nerve center, the trick is done. Isadora Duncan mentions something to this effect in her own life. The mind then is lifted to a higher plane, and the body becomes light, airy, as in Ferry's case when she acted. The body is almost forgotten in concentration on the idea and moves mechanically, without effort to express the idea. Ramakrishna—though so weak in body—could sing and dance for hours when he was in *bhava* [ecstasy], when his mind was concentrated on the idea. And as he lost the body idea, his dancing became more graceful. It is an intriguing subject, but overlooked by biographers.

Almora, January 30, 1932

Be the Witness

I think you are falling in love with the ranch. No wonder—such a beautiful place. If one could only have it as a hobby instead of as a paying proposition. Be the Witness and let the others do the work and worrying. But possession means care always.

Binsar, October 2, 1937

My 68th Birthday

You must be developing yoga powers quietly, without telling us anything about it. Imagine my surprise when at 10 A.M. on 7 Feb., I received two letters from you with a $5 bill for my 68th birthday (Here they say 69th, counting the day of birth). Many thanks also to Herbert, Grete, and Haridas. I never

observe my birthday, but this time I quickly arranged something: jam and little cakes which they all enjoyed.

Almora, February 12, 1938

"Who is This?"

I had a letter from Sarah [Fox], and I have written to her by the last mail. Before that I got your last letter written just before your vacation began. Such grand plans—going north [to San Francisco from Los Angeles] and seeing the old friends. Some must show their age more than others. I had a strange experience in this. One of the swamis took my picture the other day. When he showed it to me I had forgotten all about it and I said, "Who is this?" I didn't realize that I had aged so much in appearance in the last year or two. Evidently I did not pay much attention to appearance when I shaved. Anyhow, that is the way I look now. Ram Maharaj is only a few years younger and he looks older without beard than he does with a beard. It is an excellent picture of him. I'm sending the photos. Do with them as you like.

Almora, July 11, 1938

A Special Day

[On January 1, 1886, at the Cossipore garden house, Sri Ramakrishna while in an ecstatic state blessed Girish Chandra Ghosh and other householder devotees with spiritual awakening. This date has since become known as the "Kalpataru Day"—a day of celebration and rejoicing in the Ramakrishna-Vedanta tradition.]

The Almora ashrama is now almost empty—only 4 are there.

Today, New Year's Day, Sri Ramakrishna revealed his true nature to many *bhaktas* in the garden where he was the last part of his life. So it is called "The Wishing Tree Day." Each one received from him the spiritual realization he most desired. So it is a special day in India.

Dehra Dun, January 1, 1939

The Child Jesus

On Christmas Eve I tell every year the story of Jesus' birth, and on Christmas day I also have to say something. Do you know a nice story about the child Jesus? I know one story of a nun who nursed the sick. She was terribly overworked, as everybody wanted her. She refused no call because she regarded calls as coming from Jesus. Jesus in the form of the sick allowed her to serve him. One day, after all day nursing, a call came at night—a serious case. The mother superior of the convent wanted to send another nun, but she insisted on going. The doctor prescribed a concoction that had to be stirred for hours over a fire, every now and then. The poor nun fell asleep. She awakened with a start. And then she saw stirring the brew a lovely boy smiling up at her. And when she asked who he was, the boy said, "Know ye not that I take upon myself the burden of those who love me?" The child vanished, and she knew it was Jesus. I love the story but I have already told it twice, so I want something new.

Barlowganj, June 10, 1946

24

PILGRIMAGE

Return to One's Own Country

You heard, of course, that I intend to go to Holland this fall. My father requested me separately, and I think it will do me good. My health is so utterly run down by five years of the life here. I wonder how I will like the West now, after having identified myself so entirely with Eastern life and conditions and ideals so long. I always think that one gets a much better judgment—a better perspective of things—when one returns to his own country. With immigrants I have noticed it. They never get quite reconciled to the new conditions until they go back once to their old homes. Then they see things in their right proportion. My life in India has been a great experience. I do not know how long I will remain in the West. The future is not in our hands. The more we trust in Mother the more peaceful will be our life.

Mayavati, June 28, 1911

In Another Sphere

I have just returned from a most delightful little pilgrimage in the Himalayas. We all went—the swami with 5 *brahmacharins* and all the servants—some twenty of them. It was

a four-day outing. There was a large gathering of pilgrims from the Himalayan villages. The Hindus certainly have an eye for nature's beauty. One cannot imagine a lovelier spot—two rivers meeting in front of a mountain. And the pilgrims are such a happy lot. They sing and dance and call out the name of the Lord and have all kinds of innocent amusements. It is like one big family reunion. It was one of these occasions which I enjoyed with my whole heart. It seems as if one lives in another sphere. We had our ablutions at the confluence of two rivers, then we made our little offerings of fruits and flowers in the little temple, and in the evening our party sang the story of Rama's life. The people spent the night in the open or in tents, so there were hundreds of fires burning, and song and music went on all night. Religion here is always an occasion of cheerfulness. The pleasures of life are rooted in religion. And certainly a pilgrimage here is enjoyable.

Mayavati, January 16, 1915

A Unique Spot

[When Gurudas Maharaj returned to India permanently, he brought with him Swami Prakashananda, the head of the Vedanta Society in San Francisco, and the Fox sisters, who were making a pilgrimage. Swami Prakashananda left India in April 1923, with his new assistant swami for the San Francisco center, Swami Prabhavananda, but the sisters returned to America in January 1926.]

The Fox girls are simply charmed. They don't ever want to leave this place. But, of course, they must go to Mayavati when it gets hot here. And I think they will be happy there also. The swamis are very kind to them. There are considerable physical discomforts, but they don't mind it, and they have kept fairly good health. The food did not agree with them, so now they do their own cooking. I go to them for toast and eggs in the morning, and eat the other meals with the swamis. The girls are in the guesthouse, P. [Swami Prakashananda] and I in the Math building. "Here," the girls say, "Vedanta is lived. It is a life of loving service." They enjoy

the temple room where they sit and see the worship twice daily. It is very beautiful. Their time is much taken up with visitors who always come to the Math daily. The life here is very cheerful, full of fun, and underneath there is the religious current. It is certainly a unique spot. They also enjoy the singing, of which there is a great deal. There are 50 swamis living here, coming and going all the time. And then there are so many festivals with feasts, when singers and musicians come from Calcutta. It is absolutely different from a Western monastery. The girls are so pleased. They say it exceeds their wildest hopes and imaginations. I only hope they will keep good health.

There is a great deal of freedom here for every member of the Math. They can attend classes and worship as they please. And then many have their allotted duties also—helping in the kitchen, cleaning, library work, account-keeping, etc. But the duties are mostly light, and they have much free time. Toward evening many go for a walk.

The girls have been away only once to Calcutta, when they went to see Swami Saradananda at the Udbodhan Office and did some shopping. They are contented to stay here quietly, and may do some sight-seeing later. They are imbibing the spirit of the place now. How I wish you could all come some day, if it were only for a short visit. Mother can do everything, and She knows what is best for Her children.

We had a very nice celebration here on Xmas Eve—meditation before Jesus' picture and the Madonna, talks by Swamis Prakashananda and Abhedananda, and reading from the Bible by myself, and, of course, all kinds of cakes and candies as *prasad*.

I am writing under difficulties, for I share a little room with Prakashananda, who has visitors all the time. And privacy is unknown here anyhow. Anyone walks in and out as he pleases, with or without any purpose. And now good-bye and much love.

Belur Math, December 27, 1922

Happiness Is in Our Mind

We are about to leave Mayavati. It is still lovely here with bright, warm sun every day. But the nights are cold. The mountains are now at their best. It is certainly a lovely place, and I feel loath to leave it. But Kankhal, where we are going, is also nice—but of a different kind. It is on the Ganges and a place of pilgrimage. How often I wish that you could see it all. I can only hope that you are happy where you are and under the circumstances.

Happiness is in our mind, after all, and one can never tell where one will be happiest. All this external show is shallow. I hope you will have a deeper and more real happiness that does not depend on externals. That is the happiness in Mother, as Swami Turiyananda used to call it. "This Self, nearer than anything, dearer than son or wealth or anything —let us worship Him alone, for then the object of our love will never perish."

If H. [Haridas] is there, you know my love and best wishes are also for him. Strange are the ways of the Lord, but I hope we will be together again—under favorable conditions. The girls [Fox sisters] may go back this spring. I am not decided what to do.

Mayavati, November 13, 1923

Inconveniences

I have taken the girls [Fox sisters] here only over the ground I was familiar with. I have not seen a new place myself, and have no desire to. They have seen the India I knew and wanted them to see. It has been a wonderful trip for them, and they are now perfectly satisfied to go back and settle somewhere quietly.

They would not choose India for a steady diet—wonderful and grand as it all has been. There are many inconveniences one has to put up with here; and not knowing the language and customs makes one dependent on others. They would not like that permanently. Then servants are difficult to deal with here and food is not clean, etc. I am speaking, of course, for those who came here as they did—to be with the swamis. The English, with oceans of money and well-trained servants

and Western food, are in an entirely different position. But to live as the girls did, enjoyable as it was, is a great nervous and physical strain. They seem to have an enormous amount of reserve energy. It is only heat that gets the better of them, and mosquitoes. But they have avoided both by the way we have arranged our trips. Now, however, they will get a touch of both before they sail.

Kankhal, February 3, 1924

Mysteries to Ourselves

I did not tell you that I am going to Benares. Well, the girls and myself expect to go to the plains within a week. They will go on to Calcutta and drop me in the holy city, which is on the way. I expect to join them later after a few weeks, when we all go to the beautiful ashrama started by the late Swami Brahmananda [Bhubaneswar]. We are going there with, and at the suggestion of, Swami Saradananda. The ashrama is near Puri (of Jagannath fame), one night by train south of Calcutta.

We have had eight and a half wonderful months at Almora. Last evening the sunset surpassed anything I have ever seen. The snow mountains were like lit-up candles changing color every moment—a magic show, indescribably beautiful. We are having an early winter here. One early morning it was 48 degrees F. The snow in the mountains is creeping nearer after each cold spell, till all Almora will have a soft, white carpet. But we will not be here to see it.

This new plan means that the girls are going home later than we expected. I don't know when they will start—perhaps not till Feb. or March. They are not so anxious to get away as the time draws near. And who knows what Mother has in store for them? I believe that after a taste of the West again, they will long for the quiet, peaceful life here. But who can tell? We are all mysteries to ourselves even. Both times when I went back, I thought I was through with India. And here I am in India again, more firmly rooted than ever.

Almora, November 12, 1925

"Bewildering"

Today is my third day in Benares. It is good to be here again after 8 months in the mountains. I am so accustomed to the life here now that it feels quite natural to be here. I am no longer in the condition of the American gentleman who, when asked what he thought of the holy city, replied, "Bewildering." All India is bewildering, and so, I suppose, must be the West to Hindus. Only it takes ever so much longer to adjust oneself here, as Indian civilization is most confounding and intricate. No matter how long one lives here, one sees new things right along; and everything is a mystery. It takes ages even to get over one's curiosity. And for that very reason, it takes time to get the spirit of India. It takes a satisfied, quiet, and no-longer-curious mind to absorb what India holds as a distinct atmosphere of her own. Here it is simply gathering in, and then on return to the West, impressions begin to settle down. I think the girls will find it so. Here one walks in a dream, half-confused; and one asks oneself, What is it all about? Therefore it is good to get away from it for some time, to come to one's self again. I think I got more of the Indian spirit this time than on previous visits here. I enjoy it all, but I have no longer that strong, outgoing curiosity.

I just had a letter from the girls from Calcutta. They had a talk with Swami Saradananda, who said they were right in deciding to go home. So it looks as if they are really going, but not till January anyhow.

Benares, November 23, 1925

The Grip of Our Own Personality

[In a letter written to Ujjvala December 16, 1924, Gurudas Maharaj explained the Fox sisters' dilemma in India—their mental and physical exhaustion coupled with their desire to please Swami Saradananda, who was then the general secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission. Gurudas Maharaj further elaborated on the difficulties of their adjustment to India in an unpublished letter written to Haridas on December 29, 1924:

"I think if the girls had followed my advice, they also would not have wanted to go back yet. But they became ambitious

to pay back for all the kindness received, to please Sw. Saradan(anda), etc. So they went into the school [Nivedita School]. That in itself would have been alright if they had done it as I suggested. But, like all newcomers, they think that the Swamis know it all, and wanting to become one of the crowd they want to please them. They don't understand yet that the Swamis really respect and love us if we are original, independent, not exactly like them. They like us as Westerners, not as imitation Hindus. 'Be yourself,' Sw. Turiyan. used to say to me. 'You do your way. Don't imitate us.'"]

One thing I am certain you are very curious to know, and that is what I think of Sarala [Mrs. French] coming to India. There is no telling about people's tastes, likes, or dislikes. It is all futile speculation, and it is better not to hold any ideas on the subject. The future will tell. We are all in the grip of our own personality. If that personality meets with favorable experiences—with what it likes and enjoys—we like it. If it meets with unpleasant conditions and gets a few good knocks, we hate it. This is so in India as anywhere else. A kind reception, a few flattering words, and India is wonderful. A little neglect or harsh treatment, and India is beastly. This is so because we have our ax to grind. We don't come here purely as witnesses, investigators—we want to get something, to gain something agreeable to our personality. We are not satisfied to remain detached, impartial judges. That is our great limitation. Therefore, sometimes ordinary, intelligent travellers get a better, truer vision in a much shorter time than we do. We are too eternally occupied with ourselves and, thereby, lose the vision that India holds out to the impartial onlooker.

I think at home the girls may understand many things they don't begin to understand now. Most of their time now is taken up with keeping themselves afloat, alive, half-way comfortable in the midst of this exotic medley. They keep too close—too mixed up with native life—to see it in its true perspective. It hits them and knocks them blind.

If Sarala can avoid this, if she can be satisfied to live quietly at Darjeeling, helping Swami Abhedananda a little in his literary work, if she takes care of her health, if she keeps away

from Baghbazar and the school [Nivedita School] and the heat of the plains, I think all will be well, and she will get everything in time—a clear understanding in a natural way, especially if Sw. A. [Swami Abhedananda] treats her decently.

India is not understood through physical contact, but by intelligent, searching mental effort. You know how we get the delicate, real effect of a perfume—not by sticking the bottle under our nose, but by taking a drop and letting it evaporate from a little distance. It is so with getting the Indian atmosphere. Keep a little aloof, watch it from a little distance, don't be too eager to get it all at once. It simply chokes one without giving one the taste. When I go for my evening walk to the Ganges, I don't allow anyone to go with me or to talk to me when I am there. They don't teach me anything, don't enlighten me in any way. I have to observe and learn myself. If there is something I don't understand, there is time enough to ask. But I have been here many years, so I know what is going on. To illustrate: when I go in my *sannyasin* dress as I do, if I allowed it, I would have a stream of people—one after the other—asking me the same questions: Who am I?; Where did I come from?; etc. If I go in my Western clothing, no one would dare to address me, but everyone would be glad to give me any information I might want to get. Thus by keeping aloof I would really get more in touch. The less I mix with people, the more I learn. That is my experience. But newcomers will not understand this. For one thing, they are too eager.

And now the girls will be off and I will have another case to study. It is a kind of satisfaction that in every move the girls made, I could foresee the outcome correctly. The hidden motives (hidden to themselves) that prompted these moves also seem perfectly clear to me. But whether or not I am right, of course, will never be answered. Anyhow they have made me think about human nature more than I had ever done before. But, after all, there are higher things to think about than the workings of other persons' minds, interesting though it is. If I had the knack of writing stories it would have been of some use, for they certainly gave me material. Did you know that Sarah can be a good comic? She can be very funny if she lets herself go. Mrs. Cooke enjoyed her jokes and the way she told things. If the two of them got to work they could write stories,

I should think. R. [Rebecca Fox] can write excellent letters. I will surely miss them when they are gone.

I wish they could have seen Mrs. French. It must be interesting to see how she reacts here. If only she will not be too serious. One misses so much in life by seriousness. I don't mean sincerity; I mean the seriousness that makes one critical, unable to take life merrily, to see the funny side.

Benares, December 19, 1925

See the Stage Performance and Go Home

So you will have *seen* the girls and have heard all about their trip around the world, especially about their experiences in India. It must have been wonderfully interesting with snapshots and impressions still fairly fresh. And perhaps you were there when the Paramananda party arrived. That would be grand: two new swamis, Mrs. French, and an Indian widow. If Mrs. F. talks as well as she writes, you will have had a lovely time with her. If nothing else (She didn't see much of India), she got at least the Belur Math spirit. And that must be still fresh with her, as she did not blot it out with other sight-seeing impressions. She probably got the best India can give us, and if she is satisfied with it, she is fortunate indeed.

You remember Swamiji's story of the oyster that comes to the ocean surface to catch a drop of rain and then retires quietly to develop it into a pearl. That is the secret! See the stage performance and go home. Don't look behind the stage; don't be too anxious to be one of the actors. But by "going home," I don't necessarily mean returning to Oakland. I mean live anywhere quietly, meditating on the experience without wanting to be one of the performers. Ambition spoils everything, as does too close contact. We get most so long as we can see the halos. And they look brightest from a little distance. That is one side of the question. The other side is tear away all masks; see life as it is, and get united with That which is beyond life. But this is for the hero who can look at the stinking corpse that life is without batting an eyelid—without

being moved. "Who can misery love, dance in destruction's dance, and hug the form of death."*

I wonder if Sarala will ever come again. Swami Abhedananda was ready to give her a place in his ashrama at Darjeeling, a beautiful spot in the Himalayas, not far from Calcutta (22 hours by train, I believe). At Sw. Paramananda's ashrama, of course, she will feel more at home amongst conditions with which she is familiar.

Almora, July 10, 1926

Intensifying Spiritual Practice

I had a letter from John S. I find it difficult to reply to such letters, as everything depends on the person. What does he expect from India? How will he meet disappointments? What will disappoint him? What will he like and what dislike? How well can he adjust himself to new conditions? He has everything favorable now. In India his senses will be constantly drawn outward, and also his mind. One is naturally curious about new things, and everything will be new to him here: food, sights, dress, language, customs. All this is, no doubt, interesting, but will it answer his purpose of "intensifying spiritual practice"? India is more liberal now than when I came. Still, there is a good deal of orthodoxy outside our Mission. But as long as he stays in our Mission centers, he will probably find little difficulty and much to enjoy.

Here is a little incident that may amuse you. But it happened 30 years ago at Benares. I went with a *brahmacharin* to a Hindu tea shop for a cup of tea. I sat at a little table outside the shop. The *brahmacharin* went inside and brought 2 cups of tea. When he had finished, the proprietor brought the bill. When he saw me (though I was in *brahmacharin* dress), he was furious. I had defiled the place, being a Westerner. Anyhow, I settled the matter by paying for the defiled cup, saucer, and spoon. Fortunately he did not charge me for the table and chair I had occupied.

When I was at Puri, Sw. Brahmananda was also there. One day 2 priests came to the swami and demanded money to

*This is a paraphrase from Swami Vivekananda's poem "Kali the Mother."

purify the temple. They said that I had entered the temple. It was not true, so they were driven away. Such were the conditions when I came to India. I don't know how it is today as I have lived in the Himalayas for the last 20 years and don't go anywhere to clash with orthodoxy. It is all fun if you can take it in the right spirit.

Barlowganj, April 26, 1948

"Chew the Cud"

Your letter addressed to John and me came just after I had left Kankhal—but John, after reading it, sent it on to me with a note from him telling about his trip to Rishikesh. Rishikesh has lost much of its charm since a town has sprung up there, but the natural scenery is "elegant," as John expressed it. I wanted to write a few lines to John to wish him bon voyage, but the wish was not expressed after all. I trust, however, that all went well and now you will be hearing all about it, as he expected to get back on the 15th—that is before this letter reaches you. It will take a little time for John to digest all he has taken in on this trip. "After a pilgrimage," Thakur said, "one should 'chew the cud.'" Well, he will have a good deal to chew after seeing so much. And then, I expect, he will be ready for more, as it was in my case.

But it took me four years to hear the call again, or rather to feel the urge.

Barlowganj, April 12, 1953

25

WITH THE SWAMIS IN INDIA

Swami Turiyananda

His Departure

[Swami Turiyananda returned to India in order to consult with Swami Vivekananda on the direction of the American work. From the evidence of letter extracts in chapters 19 and 20, the swami suffered much hardship in attempting to train some students who were nonreceptive to his ways. However, Swami Turiyananda also attracted many American students, including Shanti-ashramites and San Francisco members, who remained obedient, faithful, and devoted to him throughout their lives.

Furthermore, no matter what hardship Swami Turiyananda endured, either in America or India, he was a yogi of a very high order—capable, at a moment's notice, of detaching himself from his mind, body, and surroundings. In a heretofore unpublished letter written to Ujjvala from Miss Helen Mead's home in Los Angeles, dated April 5, 1901, Swami Turiyananda alluded to the hardship he was even then undergoing and the way in which he accepted it:

"Glad to know from your letter to Dhira how strong you are feeling. Surely Mother is so very kind to you. It is so good of you to remind me in your letter the way Mother makes us

strong. It is very, very true. Without hard blows and knocks, we never become strong. But as we want to be strong, never mind the blows. And again Mother is there. Why should we be afraid of anything? So you need not be anxious at all for me. Success, failure, pleasure, or pain, even life or death, is all the same to me. At least it should be so. I am feeling stronger for I am feeling so near to Mother again."]

Swami [Turiyananda] has gone back to India. After the many months that we were with him during his nervous trouble, after seeing in what condition he left here, after knowing the cause of his suffering and the attitude of some of his students towards him, it is but natural that we were looking anxiously for news from our city friends. But nobody has taken the trouble to notify us—even that Swami has left this country—except you. Well, we are glad, really glad, to know at least that much, for when he left here nothing seemed settled. Indeed, a tragic end of a short career in this country. We know nothing about his last days with you all, nothing about his last words and instructions, nothing about his physical and mental condition at the time of his departure. Neither are we informed as to the attitude of his friends and so-called friends towards him and his work, nor Swami's parting advice to them all.

My dear Ujjvala, we have seen it demonstrated again that spirit and matter do not agree. The God-man, crucified once more—not in the crude but open way of centuries ago, but in the smooth, polished, hypocritical way of this age of civilization. The fact is before us, and, for as far as we have taken share in it, let us not push the blame from us by false accusations. There may be many things in Swami's words and actions that we do not understand. Our western-trained minds may question many a point, but the shameful, disrespectful, and insulting way in which Swami has been treated towards the last will never be justifiable. But this belongs to the past.

As to the future, nothing is very clear to me. I have my instructions not to antagonize, and for the rest, Swami has given me full freedom. Whether or not I shall identify myself with the Ashrama work in the future is quite uncertain, as Swamiji has asked Dr. Logan [Sthitadhi] to see to the work.

Perhaps Swami has expressed his wish in the matter to you. It makes no difference. Those who are left in charge will heed their own interests only. They could not even wait until Swami was gone to snatch his work out of his hands.

Well, Ujjvala, you and I and others know what Swami was and what he has done for each of us. By serving the Mother, we serve him; by being true to ourselves, we show loyalty and gratitude to him. You have a good insight, and I would value it much to have your opinion on this matter—fair and open. May Swami find quietude and peace of mind, and may his health be restored, and may the Divine Mother keep him and us all.

Shanti Ashrama, June 12, 1902

[In spite of resistance from some American students towards his training, Swami Turiyananda fully intended to return to America after consulting with Swamiji about the American work. In this connection, in Volume 6 of Marie Louise Burke's series, Swami Vivekananda in the West *(p. 298), we read:*

"According to the Pacific Vedanta, *he (Swami Turiyananda) intended to return to California after a year's rest. But it is said that when his homeward-bound ship touched port in Rangoon and he learned the thunderbolt news of Swamiji's death a week earlier, he then and there, in an agony of grief, threw his Western clothes into the Bay of Bengal, knowing that he would never have the heart to return. And return he never did. There is evidence that this is as Swamiji would have wished. 'Sarada (Swami Trigunatita) will soon be leaving for America to replace Brother Hari (Swami Turiyananda),' Swami Premananda wrote to Swami Abhedananda on August 20 of 1902. 'Swamiji had arranged this before his death.'"]*

We heard from Swami last night for the first time. His letter was rather sad, but did not give any information, except that his health is much better and that a swami will be sent soon.

Shanti Ashrama, September 14, 1902

Mother's Ways

I was glad to receive your letter and copy of Swami's. It is too bad Swami is suffering so much. It will require time before he will fully regain his health and vigor, if he will recover at all. I am anxious to hear about him from the new swami when he comes. Mother's ways are hard to understand. May She keep us from rebelling, and may She keep us submissive and resigned.

Shanti Ashrama, October 28, 1902

Letters from the Swami

I received a letter from Swami Turiyananda and also from Swami Saradananda. Swami Turiyananda says:

> I am feeling much better now and hope to be able to resume Mother's work again if She wills it so before very long. I have received many kind letters from my different friends in America, both East and West. I thank them all for their best wishes for my well-being. It is so encouraging to know that there are so many earnest souls to pray for me.

This letter was from Brindaban, Dec. 11. Swami Saradananda says:

> I cannot tell how long Swami T. will remain at Brindaban. Perhaps not more than four months. But he intends to travel about until he is perfectly well. Swamiji's death has given him a rude shock indeed; but he is gradually getting over it. The demand for such workers as Swami T. is great in India and he will have to do some work even when travelling. He told me he would like to stop at Benares and do some work there after he has finished with Brindaban. In the latter place too, people come to him constantly for directions, and there also he expects to do some work.

Shanti Ashrama, February 1, 1903

Swami Turiyananda writes: "They celebrated the birthday anniversary of Swamiji for the first time at the Math on the 25th of January last. It was a great success. Madras, Benares, Allahabad, and many other places observed the day with festivals." Swami seems to be improving in health.

Shanti Ashrama, March 13, 1903

I have received a letter from Swami Turiyananda, but there is not much news in it. He is steadily improving in health, and, but for the headaches, at times I think he is quite strong and healthy. He will be travelling in the Himalayas by this time. He sends his love to all his friends as usual.

Shanti Ashrama, May 24, 1903

Swami Turiyananda is still in Brindaban. He has been suffering from a severe cold and cough and a little fever, but was much better when he wrote. Our poor Swami, how much he suffers. I sometimes wish I could be with him, but what could I do for him anyhow? Mother can do all things. We may pray to Her.

Shanti Ashrama, June 22, 1903

[Just as Swami Turiyananda wrote letters to Gurudasa during this time, so also did he write to Ujjvala. In a candid letter, written 19 May 1904, from Brindaban, the swami shared with her an inspired message of detachment concerning the opinions of others—clearly, not the "poor, suffering swami" which Gurudasa thought he, perhaps, was. In fact, in this letter, Swami Turiyananda showed concern for Gurudasa's pain and despondent state of mind:

"It has pleased me very much to know that you all have been doing well in every way. Only I am very sorry to learn of Gurudasa's pain. I feel thankful to Mary (Magee) for her practical sympathy for Gurudasa. May Mother keep*

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* Gurudasa was suffering from an intense side pain at this time.

Gurudasa hale and hearty. He is such a noble soul! I think it will be very good for him if he can come to the city and live with congenial friends, which it is impossible for him to do in the Ashrama under the circumstances. At any rate, a change will do him good.

"I got a letter from him of late. It was so sad and full of despair, and it pained me very much. Please do not tell Gurudasa that I have written you this. For it will then give him more pain. I would also ask you not to quote my letter to anybody, far less to read it, because I am told there has been so much of misunderstanding and feeling amongst some of the students in your city on account of my letters being read and talked over. Of course, I write every letter with the best of motives, and as I have no other end but the good of you all at heart, I do not care what others may say or think about my 'attitudes' towards the Vedanta work there, though I cannot help feeling sorry for them for their misunderstanding me in this way. However, I am not at all offended for the opinions they have passed about me because I know the world very well. You cannot give me any pain, my dear Ujjvala, by writing me things which you do not consider pleasing. He must be a fool who expects all agreeableness from this world of Maya*—nescience. You, of course, do not take me as one such, so you need not be afraid of giving me pain. Yet if you do not want to write things you don't like, I would not ask you to do that.*

"Now, as to your own affairs—whether you should do this or that. My dear Ujjvala, that is not for me to dictate to you. Only I would tell you to feel free to do what you should think right and best. No namby-pamby there. That is all. The Ashrama belongs to Mother and Her children—today, tomorrow, and for all time to come. You need not be anxious for that.

"I am glad Swami Tri(gunatita) has been doing so well. I hope his journey to Los Angeles will prove helpful to the students there and beneficial to him."]

Swami's Greatness

You asked me to tell you something about Swami Turiyananda and I will gladly do so. When I arrived in the ashrama in Kankhal, I met the swami for the first time since I had come to India, then four months ago. It seemed quite natural to see him again, and Swami also did not think it at all strange to see me. It was just as if we had not been separated but a short time. Swami looked a little older, as his hair and beard are getting quite gray. But as he shaves both, it is not so noticeable most of the time. At times he looked very young, as he used to do in America. He was, of course, much eager to hear about everyone. He spoke so nicely of his students, and he felt quite satisfied as to the work the Mother did through him in the West. His life here was very much the same as it was in the West when he was not doing any special work—watching over everybody and everything that is going on around him and giving his opinion about matters in his style. He was, of course, not so satisfied with the way the work is conducted in San Francisco, but he said, "I have finished. Let others do as they think right. It is all in the hands of the Mother."

Swami's health is better than I expected, though not at all as it should be. He had suffered a great deal from toothaches and, at times, of nervousness, and he likes to be all alone. He said sometimes that he thought he would get his health back and that it seemed as if he was to do some work again. But most of the time, he said, "No more work in this body. Let me live in a quiet place near the Ganges all alone. Then I may think of Mother, and I may soon drop this body." But you remember how different he was in such moods.

He talked a great deal—often in Bengali, which I did not understand. But he spoke to me about Swamiji's work—how little was going on in his spirit of work, both in India and abroad.

Swami is living as thousands of *sannyasins* here do. Food and shelter are often insufficient, unless someone takes an interest in him. Then he may get better shelter and better food. And sometimes his travelling will be made easier. Someone may give him some money to go by train or to engage a man to carry his bundle of bedding, a little clothing

or books, as such things are a great help. Or he may engage a man to build a hut or repair an old hut to live in and keep dry from the rain. In that way his friends are often thoughtful about him.

And wherever he goes, he is soon discovered to be more than an ordinary *sannyasin*. In Kurukshetra many came to him. One will talk and then others will join in, and they will bring their friends. A few times he chanted his old chants. It sounded so wonderful. It not only brought back old associations, but it seemed to lift me right back into the same atmosphere. I have not heard anything like it in India. I appreciated it much more now than in the West. As a whole I think I appreciated Swami's greatness better here than in America. I wonder whether India has another man like him.

Next to Swami, I like Swami Saradananda, though I have not seen much of him. And, in fact, I like them all. Swami did not himself know where he would go when he [Swami Turiyananda] left him [Swami Saradananda] in Kurukshetra. But he thought he would go to the hills, and if he found a nice place he might stay there more permanently, as he lived two years in Brindaban when he came from the West. I saw the house there. He lived there with a *brahmacharin*, and they did their own cooking. He paid only 2 rupees per month for the house, and food is also cheap. I hope he will find something like that again. I was sorry to leave him, but he wanted to be alone.

Belur Math, February 9, 1907

Always Suffering

When I was with Swami Turiyananda he showed me your letter, and he enjoyed it very much. So I think you might write to him whenever you wish. I do not know where he is at present. He intended going to the mountains, as it is now terribly hot in the plains. His health seems a little better nowadays, though he is always suffering somewhat. He feels not at all inclined to take up any work at present. But perhaps later on he may feel differently.

I myself am not yet settled about the course I shall take, and naturally Swami Turiyananda would not decide to do anything until he sees me settled.

Mayavati, May 10, 1907

What Mettle

Swami is doing better now. He had his loose teeth extracted and has not any pain now. Of course, the life is so very difficult, I fear he will always suffer in this way. He is the only one among his brother swamis who continues in that wandering life. But he feels that it is the true life for a *sannyasin*. And how can we but admire such sincerity?

To live this life when one is strong and healthy and full of youthful enthusiasm is quite another question, but to persevere under the present conditions shows us what mettle these swamis are made of. In Swami Akhandananda we see another instance of perseverance and self-denial. Such men, though they remain unknown to the world at large, are the real ornaments of humanity, and the very types after which we have to be molded. It is good to see these things for oneself. What greater teachings can we receive—what greater help, than to live with men of character! Coming to India is a wonderful thing, not so much to see the temples and places of pilgrimage (interesting and helpful as that is) as to see and live with great men that know how to keep their lofty ideals and how to live them, even unto the last.

Prabuddha Bharata Office
September 14, 1909

This Wretched Body

Swami's health has much improved lately. He is now in Benares where he will remain another week, and thence he will go to the Math to meet all his brothers and friends again after some 6 or 7 years. I told the swami that, according to Mira's report, you were looking so well and so much improved in health after your rest in the country. He was very glad to hear it.

A Pipe Dream

I have written to others also a few weeks ago, so you know about Sw. Turiyananda's condition. I do not know what to say about it. He looks healthy, has a good appetite, is cheerful, sleeps fairly well, and has no fever. But rheumatic pain, though not so severe now, is still troubling him much, and he is quite helpless and in bed. He can move his arms and legs, but the hands are very stiff so that he cannot use them at all. He sits up in bed sometimes, but he has to be lifted into that position and then placed back again on his back. He gets excellent nursing, and the best doctors attend him. There are two, three, or four men with him most of the time. And everything possible is being done to make him comfortable. He wants to make a trip to America when he gets well, so that he can go about. But when will that be? Sometimes I fear that his right foot will never be strong again. The doctors say that he will get all right, but that it will take a long time. As soon as he gets a little better, he will probably go to the Math. An automobile would take him there in half an hour or 45 minutes, so it would not be so difficult. It would be very pleasant there for him, as there is a nice guest house with a wide veranda all around it, and the view is very pleasant—a long lawn, coconut and other trees, and the Ganges with its constant traffic. And there are a great many people there always. Then when it gets hot in Feb. or March, he will probably go to a cool place. So you see how uncertain everything is.

This morning I got S.N.'s [Satya-Nishtha] letter of Oct. 2. *Do not let Swami* know from your letter, but I think his coming will be out of the question. The doctor told me very *confidentially* that probably his right foot will always be stiff and the fingers also. But who knows? He himself thinks that he will soon be all right again. Of course, there is no danger of life.

Udbodhan Office, December 21, 1917

New Conception of God

When shall I see you again? I am ready to come. But Swami Turiyananda is still in bed and will be for some time to come. So I cannot leave him in this condition. He is gradually

improving, but very slowly. The pain is not so severe now, but he is still unable to use his hands. The fingers are still stiff. But he will be all right in time. I must be patient. He would take it to heart, should I leave him now. So I must wait.

I told Swami about Mrs. Lindquest's new conception of God—the Mother, instead of the Father. He said, "Yes, because it is Mother's place. No Father there. In the Ashrama [Shanti Ashrama] it is Mother." Wasn't that nice? He also said, "People will go there to realize. It is the place for that." Whether he will ever go to America again is doubtful—anyhow, not till after a year or so. But I hope to come soon. Let us see.

Udbodhan Office, January 24, 1918

Strong Advice

Swami's coming is out of the question. He is not at all able to travel so far. He cannot even walk. And then, I also think that he is better off here with the other swamis and *bhaktas* of the Mission. He would have liked to come (at least on a visit), but for a long time he would not be able, even should he be able to get a passport. He now advises me very strongly to go to America without delay, as Holland's position is so critical [the advent of World War I]. Of course, I do not feel in the least nervous about it. I myself would never dream of leaving India for that. At most, I could be interned, and I do not think they would make it strict with me. I am really an American in all respects, except, of course, according to law. And even then, I took out my first papers twenty years ago, so I cannot be considered a staunch Dutchman. And should Holland take the other side, the whole world would know that it was not her choice, but that she was forced into it. But God forbid that it should come to that. Anyhow, they think it is better for me to return, and I am quite ready.

Kankhal, April 14, 1918

[In spite of Swami Turiyananda's "strong advice," Gurudas Maharaj's steamer, which was scheduled to leave for San

Francisco, underwent a series of postponements which discouraged him from leaving India.]

Swami Turiyananda is at the Math now. I do not know what to say about his condition. He is getting a little better, I think. He looks well and strong, and he is cheerful. But there is still pain, and his hands and shoulders are still stiff. He can walk a few steps, that is all. First, he was quite enthusiastic about my going. He thought I might be in trouble here if Holland goes on the wrong side. But when it turned out this way, he said, "All right, I do not feel anxious about it any more." He is in a very lovable mood. The other swamis all thought it much better for me to stay in India till after the war. They are all so kind to me.

Mayavati, June 17, 1918

To Benares

Poor Swami is not getting much better. He had an abscess again that had to be opened. It is just dragging on this way. It is disheartening. Of course, his coming to America is altogether out of the question. Considering his condition, everything is ideal for him here. He will probably go to Benares with Sw. Brahmananda and others in a week or two. There will be a great celebration of Durga Puja there this year, financed by the mother of a junior swami. So they will all enjoy that. And travelling will be made very comfortable for Swami. He will go in an ambulance to the station. A first-class compartment will be reserved for him. And it is only one night in the train. His nurses go, of course, with him. These nurses (*brahmacharins*) are really wonderful.

Mayavati, September 24, 1918

Swami's Room

[Swami Turiyananda passed away on July 21, 1922. See Appendix A.]

The death of Swami Turiyananda has not affected the Mission, of course, as far as its activities are concerned.

The money I have collected to buy Swami Turiyananda's room will go to the little ashrama that he started at Almora, in the Himalayas. That ashrama will be kept in his memory, and from the interest of the money (Rs. 1200), one monk can be supported. So it will be kept up, and Swami's own room where all his belongings are taken, will be kept for a meditation room in his memory. I think this arrangement will be satisfactory to all the donors. I lived with him in that ashrama when I came back from one of my pilgrimages. You may tell the friends about this arrangement when you see them. And, if you wish, you may read part of this letter to all who are interested. You may send it to Agnes and Gopika.

Belur Math, December 27, 1922

"New Cases"

[In an unpublished letter to Haridas, dated December 29, 1924, Gurudas Maharaj argued against "the idea of a kind of community of 5 or 6 people living together to become 'spiritual.'" He wrote:

> *"It makes it too tense, creates an unnatural atmosphere, breeds criticism and whatnot. And after a while it would become terribly dull and stupid. Many people, many ideas, many whims—and no young fresh life to relieve the tenseness. The ashrama under Sw. Turiyan. was possible only because new people came and went. Sw. Turiyan. was always looking for 'new cases.' That kept up the enthusiasm and interest."*

In the following letter extract Gurudas Maharaj reiterated this idea.]

Sadhus of our Mission come and go here, which is always interesting. Do you remember Swami Turiyananda in the Ashrama: "I want new cases"? New people bring new life anyhow, opportunity for fresh observation, fresh thought.

Almora, April 9, 1926

The Old Ashrama Crowd

The Magee family seems such a happy family. My love to them. Do you ever think of Mira? I do often. And also of Frank R. [Rhodehamel] and Rebecca [Fox] and the old Ashrama crowd—Dhira singing "Hari Om" in the hills. Some, I think, had visions or some kind of experiences. I don't know just what, but it was a grand time. I remember one morning at breakfast a bird was chirping outside and Turiyananda said, "Hear, the bird is saying 'Tui, tui,' the Bengali for 'Thou, Thou.' The bird is calling Mother." And remember Swami's favorite song, "O mind, remember the Mother in whatsoever form you like. Remember the great *mantra* given by your guru. Day and night worship Her." And remember the girl who was a little deaf (Swami was very fond of her) asking, "Swami, what do you mean by Mother?" And remember Swami's reply: "She is everything and everywhere." I forget the girl's name. She was the daughter of an admiral. It was she who one day came to Swami's tent with some dry twigs and Swami asked, "What is that?" And she explained that in the Upanishads it is written that a disciple should approach the guru with firewood in his hand. This symbolizes that he is willing to serve the guru. Swami was so pleased. You may remember many things if you try—your automatic writing and Swami, perhaps a little frightened, saying, "Do you want to bring spooks here?" It was great fun—the Mother's play. I still remember the little tent you occupied. Well, Ujjie, Mother is the same now as She was then, though we may not feel so close to Her now. But we have all grown spiritually, whether we realize it or not. The experience has not gone in vain. "Once Mother's child, always Mother's child," the swami used to say and "All of you are Mother's children. Good, bad, or indifferent—you all belong to Her." And She is drawing us to Herself all the time, but in different ways—trying to wake us up from our sleep and to shake off this world-dream.

Almora, [Undated]

From the Mantelpiece

I have received Sw. Turiya's pictures and am very glad to have them. Mr. Ghandy gave me a lovely black frame for it,

and now dear Swami is facing me from the mantelpiece. It is the smaller size picture. The swami looks different from his other photos. But very typically his own self.

[Barlowganj], September 16, 1941

Swami's Chant

Do you remember Sw. Turiyan's chant: "May we hear with our ears what is right and good; may we see with our eyes what is holy and beautiful; may we keep our bodies and minds under control"? It is the peace chant of some of the Upanishads. Of course he had other chants too.

Barlowganj, June 10, 1946

Yes, I remember Swami T.'s military chant—no words, only "Om." Of his songs I remember only: "*Mana Bali Bhaja Kali, ichha hay tur je achare*—O mind, I tell thee, worship the Kali in any form you like." His meditation *shlokas* varied. They were chanted and freely translated. I remember some: "The Infinite is bliss," etc. *(Chandogya Up.* 7-23); "Truth alone triumphs"; "The Permanent in all that is impermanent"; "May we hear with our ears"; and others.

Kankhal, February 12, 1948

Initiation

[In this connection, Swami Prabhavananda, in his unpublished conversations (courtesy of the Sarada Convent, Santa Barbara), related that Sister Lalita (Mrs. Carrie Wyckoff, who gave her house to Swami Prabhavananda as the "Vedanta Home" and future Vedanta Society of Southern California), one day approached Swami and asked for initiation. Surprised at her request, Swami Prabhavananda asked Sister if Swami Turiyananda had not initiated her. She replied that he had not. However, upon further inquiry, the swami learned that one day in the rose garden of her home, Swami Turiyananda had written something on her tongue. Swami Prabhavananda then confirmed to Sister that she had at that time received initiation.]

In India, Sw. Turiyananda never gave any kind of initiation, I am told. Yes, giving a *mantra* is initiation. The name is not changed except in *brahmacharya* and *sannyasa*. Giving a *mantra* is a kind of ceremony here. I never heard of Sw. T. having any ceremony when he gave the *mantra* and a name. So I never thought of it as "initiation." But you know better how he gave the *mantra* and name. I thought he did it in an off-hand way, during a walk or a talk or so. But I really know very little of his behavior with others. Mira told me once, "Sw. T. told me to repeat Sri Ramakrishna's name, and now the name continues to repeat itself." No one else told me anything, and I never tried to find out. It would be interesting if you mention these personal things in your article on Sw. T.

Kankhal, March 13, 1949

Swami's Dish

Do you remember once, at least, Sw. Turiyananda prepared a dish for us in the Ashrama: rice mixed with peas from our little garden? But I don't think he was much of a cook as other swamis are. I don't remember if Sarah was in the Ashrama during Swami Turiya's time. I think not. But Shanti [Alice Hansbrough] may be able to tell you a good deal about Sw. Turiya. She must be very old now.

Barlowganj, May 1, 1949

Remembering Again

Yes, I remember that I used to take Sw. Turiyan's breakfast to him during his retirement. I don't remember that he recited the Gita every morning. That would take over one hour. But I remember that one morning there was an omelet, and I was told that the swami should eat it before it got cold. But when I came to his cabin, he was seated on the floor and reciting the Gita. So I dared not disturb him, and the omelet had to wait 15 or 20 minutes, till he had finished. I was then living with him in the same cabin. Later I got a log cabin—one room 8 by 10 feet.

One evening during that time, after our meditation hour, we chatted some time, and Dhira told us that Swami sometimes

played cards at her home. When I went back to the cabin for the night, the swami said, "You see, I sometimes played cards at Dhira's home. I should not have done that." I was rather startled, but no more was said. I did not tell him that Dhira had told us. You know, he was always anxious to know what we talked about during his absence. He would always ask me. As I was a bad reporter, he would sometimes send for Sadhu-Charan, who would tell him.

Barlowganj, July 11, 1949

Direct Disciples

(in chronological order)

[Gurudas Maharaj had the blessings of the direct disciples mentioned in this chapter as well as some who are not—including Holy Mother, his diksha *guru, Swami Premananda (mentioned in chapter 20) and Swami Trigunatita (mentioned throughout the "Letters"). References to the holy personalities which follow are also not confined to this chapter but to those letter extracts whose subject matter pertain to a specific chapter in this book and also incidentally include material associated with a direct disciple.]*

Swami Brahmananda

Dec. 25th. Merry Xmas to all. I have just returned from the Math where we celebrated Xmas Eve—worship of Jesus, reading from the Bible, a lecture on Jesus by me, and offering of fruits, cake, etc. There was a kind of holy communion. We took a sip of wine and bread. Sw. Brahmananda blessed us all, sprinkling Ganges water over the audience, as they do in the Roman Catholic church. The decoration was very nice—the Madonna with the child Jesus, green flowers, candles, incense, etc. It was very enjoyable. There was a large gathering.

Udbodhan, December 21, 1917

Swami Abhedananda

[Swami Abhedananda had just returned to Calcutta on December 11, 1922, from Kashmir and Tibet. According to the History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission *(1957 ed.; p. 260):*

"Habituated for a quarter of a century to the Western mode of life, Swami Abhedananda found it difficult to adjust himself to the conditions prevailing at Belur in those days, with too many monks in each room and a very poor standard of living. . . . (Also upon his return to Calcutta), he tried to persuade his colleagues to shift at least the Mission headquarters to Calcutta, where it could be in more effective touch with the public, and where he could live and be more useful in the way he had trained himself to be in the West. As the Governing Body could not accede to his request, he decided to live in Calcutta all by himself from February 20, 1923, when he leased premises No. 48B Mechhuabazar Street."]

Swami Abhedananda had a fine reception from the Calcutta public—addresses in silver caskets, silver-mounted *kamandalu* [water pitcher], etc., etc. The same will be repeated with Prakashananda on Jan. 6th, at the University Hall. Swami Abhedananda has no plans it seems. He does not know what to do. He is now at the Math, after 6 months touring in Kashmir and Tibet. He has his own food arrangements, etc., as the Math food does not agree with him. He seems fairly well fixed financially and gets everything he wants.

Belur Math, December 27, 1922

[Gurudas Maharaj's first meeting with Swami Abhedananda took place in America (see Part II). In an article entitled "My First Contacts with Vedanta," written in the February 1954 issue of the Prabuddha Bharata, *Gurudas Maharaj described something of his relationship with Swami Abhedananda. He wrote:*

"One would think that we became very intimate with the swami. But in reality, it was not so. He liked us—he loved us—but yet there was something in him which kept him a

little aloof. He was always steeped in his own thoughts. He was kind, and would answer any of our questions, and remove any of our difficulties—but intimacy, he would have none. However, this did not have any dampening effect upon us. On the contrary, this made us practice all the more, having always the comforting feeling that whenever we had any difficulty on our way, the swami was there to remove it.

"Months of my brahmacharya*-hood passed smoothly. I felt I was progressing in my practices, and that always kept my heart filled with great joy. But after a time, I found that the progress had come to a stop. Try however much I would, there was no advancement! What was this? Why was it so? Assailed with thoughts, doubts, and misgivings like this, I went to the swami. He received me very affectionately and put all my doubts at rest by a few simple statements of his, which I could feel came from his very heart—from his store of personal experiences and realization. Put in a nutshell, what he said was this: 'Set-backs like what (you are) passing through come to almost every treader of the spiritual path. It should never be taken as a discouragement. One must persevere with great sincerity. The path of progress in the "Divine Field" can be compared to a vertical spiral, the aspirant starting from the center of it. After he has reached a peak, his path leads him to a trough which, though a descent, is really a gathering up of his energies for the next crest, which is higher than the previous one. This seeming descent is absolutely necessary for his climbing up to the next altitude. Thus, taking everything into account, this going down is really progress!' It can be easily imagined how much encouraged I was with these words of the swami. Now that I can look back on the whole of my life, I find how true every word of the swami was!*

"When this life of brahmacharya *had lasted for some time, I felt an intense desire to renounce the world. I went to the swami and told him about it. The swami was pleased with it but was worried when the thought came to him as to how I was to maintain myself. I was determined to give up my job. I could not very well live in the street! For, thereby I would attract the attention of the police and the public and*

would thus be a source of hindrance to the smooth propagation of the Master's faith in America! What was he to do? How could he agree to my adopting this course of action? Thereupon I told him and Swami Turiyananda, who had come to America in the meantime, that I could go and live at a place called the 'Lord's Farm,' 25 miles from New York, with the holy people living there, as the swamis had no ashrama of their own. This was agreed upon and accordingly I betook myself to the Lord's Farm. When taking leave of Swami Turiyananda I jokingly told him that when we would have an ashrama of our own, I would certainly join him.

"I had been at the Lord's Farm for about seven or eight months when a letter and a money order came from Swami Turiyananda reminding me of my promise and telling me that now they had started an ashrama in California known as Shanti Ashrama and asking me to join it—the money sent being for the purpose of meeting my expenses of the journey. Accordingly, I came from the Lord's Farm and joined the Shanti Ashrama. Here I renewed my intimate contact with Swami Turiyananda. Later I met Swami Abhedananda in India and had the blessing of being initiated by him into sannyasa.*]*

You are the first to whom I will reveal a little news in which I hope you will rejoice. Yesterday morning at 4 A.M., I was initiated into the holy order of *sannyasa* by Swami Abhedananda. Twelve *brahmacharins* were initiated with me by Swami Shivananda. We took the vows before the sacred fire, and discarding our *brahmacharin* clothing, were invested with the holy *gerua*. My name has been changed to Swami Atulananda, which means Incomparable Bliss. On the 17th, we performed the *shraddha* ceremony after the head was shaven, except the *shikha* (little tuft of hair on the crown of the head). Some offering of uncooked rice, curd, and banana and sesame seed is made into balls with *mantras*. Before this ceremony I received the sacred thread and the Gayatri [*mantra*]. The thread and tuft of hair are later renounced and offered into the fire. And now for three days we have to beg

our food from the cook of the Math. It is given in a little cloth *jhula* that we hold up, and then is eaten in the garden near the Ganges. We may not touch fire for three days, so I cannot smoke. But I will have a chance to make up for it later.

Mayavati, February 19, 1923

[Concerning Gurudas Maharaj's sannyasa *ceremony, Swami Tattwabodhananda's unpublished reminiscences furnish us with further interesting details:*

"Gurudas Maharaj received sannyasa *from Swami Abhedanandaji at Belur Math. Since in the Ramakrishna Math, only the president of the order gives* sannyasa, *I asked Gurudas Maharaj whether at the time of* sannyasa *he was alone or others were there.*

"He said, 'Others were there.'

"'From whom then did the others take sannyasa?'

"'From Mahapurush Maharaj.'

"'When Mahapurush Maharaj was giving sannyasa, *how then were you able to receive* sannyasa *from Abhedanandaji? Did two swamis give* sannyasa *on the same day at Belur Math?' I asked.*

"Then he replied, 'Abhedanandaji was sitting there. Mahapurush Maharaj was also sitting there. As Mahapurush Maharaj was actually the president, he was giving sannyasa. *So everybody went to Mahapurush Maharaj to receive the clothes. But I straightaway went to Abhedanandaji. He could not refuse. Then the clothes were given to Abhedanandaji, and he gave them to me.'*

"When I asked Gurudas Maharaj, 'Why did you go to Abhedanandaji? Was it because you did not like Mahapurush Maharaj?' He replied, 'No, no. I had no disrespect. I went to Abhedanandaji because I had met him first; I had remained with him; he had given me brahmacharya; *and he was sitting there. If I had gone to Mahapurush Maharaj to accept* sannyasa, *what would Abhedanandaji have felt? This was in my mind. So I went to Abhedanandaji.'"]*

The photos Swami Abhedananda sent me. About the one, "Harmony of all Religions," he writes that that is a photo of an oil painting which Sri Ramakrishna saw and admired. Swami Abhedananda wrote the names of the sects represented. Keshab is the famous K. of the Gospel, by M. He made a name for himself before he met Sri Ramakrishna. In England, he was invited by Queen Victoria. In India, he was the leader of the then flourishing Brahmo Samaj, where all educated Calcutta went to his meetings—many of our senior swamis included. Jesus dancing in *kirtan* with Lord Gauranga will probably be shocking to the Western mind. But it is not dancing really. It is a shuffling movement of the feet and sometimes a waving movement of the arms. The feet don't leave the floor. The musicians move with the party—advancing, retreating or going in a circle, playing on drums, cymbals and horns.

Swami Abhedananda writes:

I had a narrow escape (going from Darjeeling to Calcutta) from a serious accident, when my railway carriage got derailed while completing a circle on a loop of the line near a bridge above a precipice. Fortunately, the train stopped just in time. Through the grace of our Lord I was not injured. It is awfully hot and sultry in Calcutta. Uncomfortable. I have received a letter from Adi [Adi Chaitanya; see chapter 15] from Berlin in which he writes that my book *How to Be a Yogi* was translated into Russian and published and went out of print. I didn't know anything about it. I know it was translated in Spanish and Portuguese.

Binsar, October 16, 1937

Swami Abhedananda is not at all well. He was getting better but he tried to walk downstairs, and the effort caused his heart to dilate again, and the swelling of his legs set in again. Dropsy. He is in Calcutta. I fear he will not be able to ever

of Sri Ramakrishna's festival at Belur Math. Swami Atmabodhananda, in charge here, is simply spoiling me with all the good things he provides for me. What a difference from my simple Almora life. But as a change, it is nice.

Calcutta, January 28, 1939

Swami Abhedananda is getting better, and he is still very active. Just now he has brought out a book *The Memoirs of Sri Ramakrishna*. It is a reprint under a new title of his *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, which he published in New York, in 1907. You know already two volumes of M.'s *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* are reprinted in English. And Nikhilananda is translating the entire five volumes of M.'s *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* from the Bengali books.

Almora, June 17, 1939

[Swami Abhedananda entered into mahasamadhi, *on September 8, 1939.]*

Last week I have written (15 Sept.) to Sarah [Fox], and I sent her the clipping about Sw. Abhedananda's death.

The Math had offering of food and special *puja* in memory of Sw. Abhedananda. Here, also, we had the same. And they had a more elaborate affair at his center in Calcutta. You might ask the swami if he gets *Vishwavani*, the Bengali monthly magazine which has Sw. Abhedananda's "Leaves of My Diary" in English. It is published from his center. They are bringing out a memorial edition of *Vishwavani* this month. If there is anything of special interest in the diary, I will let you know. So far it is just a summary of places he went to and people he met and where he lectured. How different than Sw. Turiyananda who went few places and saw few people. I expect a letter with detailed account of Sw. A.'s death from his swami-secretary. If it comes in time, I may enclose it.

Almora, [Undated]

There was a report in the paper that Sw. Abhed's diary was destroyed in a fire, but later it was reported that the original was safe. But the typed copy, which was ready for the press was burned. I enclose clippings. I don't find the diary very interesting, but as a record it is valuable. And it is a revelation to me. I had no idea he went about so much and met so many important people. I thought he was living a quiet life in his room, studying and preparing his lectures. But he was on the go all the time.

Kankhal, February 19, 1940

Swami Vivekananda

[During Swami Vivekananda's second visit to the West, Ujjvala attended Swami Vivekananda's classes and lectures in the San Francisco Bay area and also went on a trip to Camp Taylor with Swamiji and other fellow Vedantins. Thus, in the following letter, written on the 4th of July—Swamiji's mahasamadhi *day—in 1927, Ujjvala was in a reminiscing mood as she wrote to Gurudas Maharaj:*

"Dear Gurudas,

"Day of freedom for this poor slavery, for America and for Swamiji. It is the beginning of the fiscal year and a quarter of a century since Swamiji 'spat out the body.' Truly a time for new beginnings, and the first deed shall be the long delayed letter to you. I feel awe-struck sometimes to think that I actually knew Swamiji; ate at the same table with him; loaned him my pajamas; saw him sitting in his tent on the floor grinding spices in a hollow stone; watched him make candy, explaining in the process how the syrup must be boiled until free from all impurities, when it would be perfectly white; heard him repeat over and over again—half seriously, half in amusement—the cry of the Indian who had done some work in the camp and whose cup of coffee had been overlooked: 'White man like coffee, black man like coffee, brown man like coffee!'; saw him sitting on the bed in Miss Bell's tent for hours at a time talking, explaining to the four students at his feet—Miss Bell and Eloise,

Shanti and myself; and, perhaps best of all, saw him standing by the campfire against the dark background, and heard him say, 'You may meditate on what you will, but I shall meditate on the heart of a lion. That gives strength.' And never have I seen or felt anything so magnificent since that night. And yet I was utterly incapable of understanding him. I marvelled and worshipped and loved him, but when he said this world was a play, there was no response in my heart, which thought it ached with the tragic reality of it, but only indignation. And I was timid; and when he asked me to tell a story, I shifted the request to Miss Bell and kept silent. And when it came time to go to the city Saturday afternoon, and Swami asked, 'Why do you go?', the poor stupid fool replied, 'I have to go, Swami, to have a music lesson.' (Miss Bell had to go to give her Sunday sermon at the Home of Truth, and the custom was for me to go Saturday, have my lesson, take her sermon in shorthand on Sunday, and return with her after the lecture.) Then he said, 'Go then, and make half a million dollars and send it to me for my work in India,' and he took me to the train and put me on the car. I thought then, and have thought ever since, that he was joking. Anyone would have thought it a joke— poor, sickly weakling, weighing less than a hundred pounds, without any business or any other kind of sense. But lately the idea comes to me again and again (beginning of senile dementia, maybe) that, perhaps, it was not altogether a joke, but a command, and if I could have realized it and bent every effort to that end, how different life might have been. No wonder Swami Turiyananda shook his head and said, 'Prematurely ripe.' Maybe it will yet be fulfilled in another life. Now his picture is on the bookcase, and beneath it is a little white lion 'Abhir' that you gave me; and every time I look at it, I think of Swamiji in the forest at Camp Taylor."]

The opening page of your letter [of July 4, 1927] reads like an article on Swamiji. If there had been another page like it, I would certainly have sent it to one of our magazines, for it is excellent. Such a vivid little pen picture and in such an easy, pleasant style, most interesting. How the Hindus will enjoy your description of Swamiji grinding spices, etc. You could

add that Swamiji said, "Fear is the only sin. Be fearless! What is there to fear? You are the Atman." You could make it a new paragraph beginning with "'*Abhih, Abhih, Abhih*' (Be fearless) was constantly on Swamiji's lips." Perhaps it was a much needed message to us who were hemmed in on all sides by conventionalities and fear of the opinions of others. To live in a remote camp with a Hindu yogi was, at that time, a new venture that could not escape the criticism of society, and that was looked upon askance by the orthodox Christians. We were looked upon as eccentric, to say the least.

Almora, August 16, 1927

[Throughout Gurudas Maharaj's correspondence with Ujjvala, he encouraged her to write her reminiscences of the direct disciples she had met, as demonstrated in the previous letter extract and the following asides.]

I quite agree with you in what you say about writing about Swamiji and Sw. Turiyananda. Biography should be true. Otherwise we may fall into the difficulty of confusing the readers, should others write opposite facts. Dhan Gopal Mukherji has made that blunder [see chapter 17]. He contradicts other books. In the future it will be difficult to know what is correct—what to accept, and what not—as is now the case about Jesus.

Benares, January 10, 1928

Are you preserving any of your recollections of Swamiji and Sw. Turiyananda? Just note them down as they come to you, and I will make them into an article. One saying, one instance a day. It is a good vow for the new year.

Almora, November 6, 1928

[When Gurudas Maharaj was asked to write down his impressions of Swami Vivekananda (which were later incorporated into With the Swamis in America*, as published in 1938), he also included in his original article some of Mr. Frank*

Rhodehamel's reminiscences, which were ultimately omitted from the final draft. However, they were found in Ujjvala's memorabilia, and are included here:

"Mr. Frank Rhodehamel, another of Swamiji's ushers and devotees, also told me, and has written of his first impressions of Swamiji. He mentions 'his speaking eyes, the wealth of facial expressions and gesticulation, the wondrous Sanskrit chanting, sonorous, melodious, impressing one with the sense of mystic potency, the translations following in smiling confidence.' (Rhodehamel further noted), 'He never referred to notes and though he repeated many discourses on request, they were never mere repetitions.' It was his practice to look deliberately and leisurely over his audience before beginning a discourse. Then he would begin in a conversational tone and manner and run the gamut of impassioned modulation and impressive silences. He encouraged questions at the end of each lecture, and when someone suggested that they were tiring him with too many questions, he said, 'Ask all the questions you like, the more the better. That is what I am here for, and I won't leave you until you understand. In India they tell me I ought not to teach advaita *Vedanta to the people at large, but I say I can make even a child understand it. You cannot begin too early to teach the highest spiritual truths.'*

"He would playfully ridicule the question 'What becomes of one's individuality when one realizes his oneness with God?' 'You people in this country are so afraid of losing your in-di-vid-u-al-i-ties! Why, you are not individuals yet! When you will realize your whole nature, you will attain your true individuality, not before. In knowing God, you cannot lose anything. There is another thing I am constantly hearing in this country and that is that we should live in harmony with nature. Don't you know that all the progress ever made in the world was made by conquering nature? We are to resist nature at every point if we are to make progress.'

"Speaking of spiritual training for the mind, he said, 'The less you read the better. What are books but the vomiting of other men's minds? Why fill your mind with a load of stuff you will have to get rid of? Read the Gita and other good

works on Vedanta. That is all you need. The present system of education is all wrong. The mind is crammed with facts before it knows how to think. Control of the mind should be taught first. If I had my education to get over again and had any voice in the matter, I would learn to master my mind first, and then gather facts if I wanted them. It takes people a long time to learn things because they can't concentrate their minds at will. It took me three readings to memorize McCaulay's History of England, *while my mother memorized any sacred book in only one reading. People are always suffering because they can't control their minds. To give an illustration, though a rather crude one: A man has trouble with his wife. She leaves him and goes with other men. She's a terror! But the poor fellow cannot take his mind away from her, and so he suffers.'*

"Mr. Rhodehamel's account of his impressions of Swamiji's lectures and his own interviews with him were published in The Prabuddha Bharata *many years ago."]*

You certainly made the best of your short time, including even Camp Taylor. Of course, you couldn't remember much of Swamiji there so long ago, and not then realizing who he really was. People here seem disappointed that I have so little to say about him, having seen him in New York. The fact, of course, is that I was not ready for him, could not see his greatness. He disappointed me as a monk, St. Francis of Assisi then being my ideal. Swamiji was not well and he certainly didn't act like a stoic or a Christian Scientist. Thus by my own limitations I couldn't see the real man. Tantine said once, "My greatness is that I could recognize Swamiji at once." There is truth in that. Anyhow, we were fortunate beyond words that we could appreciate Turiyananda and the grandeur of Vedanta. Swamiji says, "People worship the man but forget the ideal he stands for." We at least could appreciate the ideal. And that appreciation has grown with the years, though age robs us of the early enthusiasm. But in depth we have gained, everyone of us, I am sure.

Barlowganj, September 6, 1941

[Ujjvala had originally taken notes of Swami Vivekananda's lectures in order to brush up on her rusty shorthand. For that reason some of Swamiji's lectures during his stay in San Francisco were published in The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, *and thus made available for posterity.]*

I was greatly interested in your story of shorthand—how you came to learn of it. How wonderful! Now we have those beautiful lectures of Swamiji that otherwise would have been lost.

Barlowganj, September 16, 1941

Swami Saradananda

From my letters to Gopi, you know about Swami Saradananda. He had a stroke of apoplexy on the 6th. He is almost always unconscious, and the right side paralyzed. I think he is not able to speak. Today we got a telegram twice. There seems to be little hope. There will be another great man removed from this world. He is the secretary of our Mission and the strongest personality, the one who has kept the Mission together—the most valuable man we have. There is something very solid about him. One feels so secure in his presence. He is so thoughtful and thinks of the comfort of others. Last winter when I was at the Math, he happened to be staying there too. Prashanta and I had breakfast with him every morning when he heard that we did not get breakfast at the Math.

Almora, August 16, 1927

[Swami Saradananda entered mahasamadhi *on August 19, 1927. The following unsigned report was found in Ujjvala's packet of memorabilia:*

"The great swami is in communion with the Master. On the 18th, his condition of health changed and fever came. Doctors couldn't do anything. Gradually his condition became worse. We were all waiting for the worst, and the

crisis came (1 P.M., August 19, 1927). All the monks assembled in the swami's room, surrounded his bed and began to chant in chorus 'Hari Om Ramakrishna,' *and watched the great soul pass away. Solemnity was in the atmosphere as if the whole universe was in the peace of meditation. Everything was calm and quiet, not a sound was heard except the chanting of the monks:* 'Hari Om Ramakrishna.' *The last moment came at 2:30 A.M., and our dear and beloved Swami breathed his last. His eyes closed and the swami slept the eternal sleep. No more awakening. The rest of the night was passed in holy songs, and in the morning* bhaktas *and disciples, men and women, began to pour in and the Udbodhan Office and lawn in front were crowded. His body was washed with rose water and perfume, holy ashes and sandalpaste were given on the forehead. A new* gerua *cloth was given, the beads were given in the hand, and incense and sandalwood were burned.* Aratrika *began—lights were waved before him. Camphor light was burned and waved with all reverence, and prints of his holy feet were taken by many.* Bhaktas *gave their offerings of flowers at his holy feet. His body was taken from the room to the yard of the Udbodhan Office and kept there while many gave their offerings of flowers at his feet. Friends, admirers, disciples,* bhaktas *and monks silently came one after the other, silently bowed down at the holy feet, gave offerings of flowers and silently departed. A new bed with flowers and a* gerua *canopy over it, on which white and red lotuses were hanging, was made ready and the holy body was placed on it and covered with heaps of flowers and garlands. The body was carried by* bhaktas *and monks to Baranagar Ghat (opposite the Belur Math) with chanting and songs. About 200 people followed on foot. A boat was ready on which the body was placed and the monks themselves rowed the boat to the Math, where all the monks of the Math were standing with folded hands to receive the great swami's body. Bells were ringing and conch shells were blown. With all reverence the body was carried to the Math yard amidst chanting and songs. Then again the body was taken back to the Ganges for bath. After bath a new silk* gerua *cloth was put on. The priest-monk of the Math made*

aratrika—*waved light and fanned the body. All the monks sat around the body. About 500 people assembled to show their last reverence to the great departed one. The place of cremation was beside Sw. Premananda's* samadhi *in the Math. Fire was of sandal and other wood. The holy body was placed over it, and fire given by the monks with the words* "Om Namo Bhagavate Ramakrishnaya" *("We bow down to Sri Ramakrishna"). The body was dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna, his beloved Master. Monks and* bhaktas *sat surrounding the fire, chanting and singing all the time. Ghee and incense were given to the fire. Within 3 hours the whole body was reduced to ashes. Nothing earthly of his body remained. The great swami has passed away, but he will ever remain in our hearts. May we all follow in his footsteps and become like him. May he come to us with his loving sweet words when we are distressed. May his extraordinary calmness come to us in our troubles."]*

Swami Vijnanananda

You have no doubt heard of the *mahasamadhi* of our late president Swami Vijnanananda on April 25th at 3:20 P.M. Bhakti [Helen Rubel] got a telegram from Allahabad, where he was in his own ashrama on the 25th of April: "Vijnanananda seriously ill. Condition not encouraging. Inform ashrama." The following day the ashrama got a telegram: "Vijnananandaji mahasamadhi this afternoon (25th). Inform Bhakti." The Belur Math also sent us a telegram. He was in ill health, and they say that he knew he wouldn't live long. He therefore hurried the opening of the temple at Belur and shifted his responsibilities of the Mission to younger shoulders. His last illness was only for two or three days.

And now we hear that Swami Nirmalananda also passed away in South India on April 26th. He, like Swami Vijnanananda, saw Sri Ramakrishna a few times. But both took sannyasa from Swamiji. Swami Nirmalananda is the one who seceded from the Mission and caused a split. This also was the Mother's play. Now Swami Abhedananda is the only direct disciple left. And he is suffering from heart trouble.

Almora, May 4, 1938

26

JOSEPHINE MACLEOD

[Josephine MacLeod, or Tantine (1858-1949), is an important figure in the history of the Ramakrishna Mission. She met Swami Vivekananda in January 1895, and thereafter became his devoted "friend" (Tantine always referred to herself as Swamiji's friend, and never his disciple) and, according to Swamiji, his "lady missionary." Influential in American society—the wealthy, politically prominent, and intellectually esteemed —Miss MacLeod was partly instrumental in introducing Swamiji to the American public. After Swami Vivekananda's passing, she continued to be a religious emissary and of financial service to the Ramakrishna Mission.]

At the Math

I will stay at Kankhal for the present. Miss MacLeod has been at the Math for over a year now. The heat means nothing to her and she is perfectly happy; she will not hear of going back to the West even for a visit, though her sister Mrs. Leggett, who is in Calcutta now, invites her. Mrs. Leggett is immensely wealthy and travels much and is an honored guest wherever she goes. An American girl, Miss Green, has been at Tagore's place near Calcutta for a year, working among the poor and sick. She comes to Miss MacLeod often. Doing

splendid work, but has been sick once or twice. Miss MacLeod keeps good health.

Kankhal, February 3, 1924

A Women's Math

In my last letter to Gopi, I wrote about the Italian at the Math. Miss MacLeod met his young wife in Italy—like her husband, cultured and capable. Miss MacLeod, always full of plans and energy, suggests a women's Math here with Sister Christine and the Italian lady added. She is always ready to look after the financial side of things, as she (at least her sister Mrs. Leggett) is very wealthy. She asked Mrs. Cooke to invite Christine up here, offering to pay the expenses.

Almora, May 5, 1925

Behind the Mask

[At one time Ujjvala collected various handwriting specimens of different personalities known to Gurudas Maharaj, in order to submit them to a handwriting analyst. Concerning Josephine MacLeod's handwriting, a note was found in Ujjvala's memorabilia that reads:

"R. (Rebecca?) writes to G. (Gurudasa?) about Miss MacLeod's being 'ever so closely masked':

"'That handwriting reading is good I think of Miss MacLeod. Yes, she is masked *all the time. She is all heart, but appears cold and not nearly so clever as she looks when it comes to people and certain type of originality. But a big, big character with good strong impulses. I think a far finer, bigger character than Christine for instance, with all C's head qualities. But she* appears *different.'*

"He adds 'I don't know Miss McL. so well, but I think R. is about right.'"]

I wrote to you in my last letter that I thought it would be interesting to compare my handwriting of twenty-five years ago with my present handwriting. The following day the swami-in-charge here came to my room with the two

little notes to Swami Turiyananda, written in 1902. Wasn't that strange? He had found them and thought I might like to have them. I enclose also Sarah's [Fox] and Miss MacLeod's and Mahatma Gandhi's. So in case you want some files to practice on, this will keep you busy.

Miss MacLeod was one of Swamiji's most intimate friends, and his best letters are written to her. I think she kept him cheerful, and her vivacity rested him. He seems to be always in her mind. She is very active and a lady of parts, a character if ever there was. The girls say she acts on them like a tonic or a fresh breeze. So I am curious to know what is behind the mask.

Almora, September 14, 1925

This is only to return the very interesting "readings" and once more to wish you a happy New Year. I am curious to get the girls' and Miss MacLeod's. She is masked in this respect: she puts on, or forces herself to be always happy, to see something wonderful in everybody. When she is in sorrow she will appear to be happy anyhow. Also I believe she is far more spiritual and devotional than she will have people believe. I wonder what Mrs. K. [Kahlert] will discover under the mask. It is certainly an interesting game. Please remember, I don't claim to know people. No one knows anyone. We see only the mask.

Benares, January 1, 1926

A New Magnet

[Mrs. Cooke, born in India and married to an Englishman, lived in Poona till her husband took their children to school in England, whereupon she moved to Mayavati and Almora in September 1923. After becoming a disciple of Swami Saradananda and closely associating for years with the Ramakrishna Mission, she remarried—a Mohammedan—and converted to Islam. Nevertheless, Mrs. Cooke continued to write to her Vedanta friends, including Gurudas Maharaj and Tantine.]

I'll begin with Tantine's letter, as that has to go back to Mrs. Cooke. She writes from Paris:

> I'm likely to go to India next November. Where can I stay to be near you? It is hardly worthwhile to go so late in the winter. And now Swami S. [Siddheswarananda] is in Paris—a new magnet for me here. I like him very much and am responsible for his coming. He is living with Monsieur and Madame Sauton, up four flights of stairs (no lift) in a lovely, light apartment—a beautiful room. Mr. Sauton came across Romain R's [Rolland] *Life of Vivekananda*, in India. He and his wife attended the lectures at the Sorbonne on Swamiji, eighteen months ago, when I spoke for five minutes. When Swami S. came, they offered to take him to live with them, and they only fear that when he begins his lectures in French, he will leave them—so welcome is he. It is a real home and shrine. I spent two hours with them all last Sunday, and I feel he is protected by them. They honour his principles, his guru, and his life. There is no telephone, which also is a protection. I'm waiting here in Paris to see which way the wind blows me; Prague, Nice, Rome, and Greece loom up behind it all. I am feeling very well again—dining and lunching out with old and new friends. But how uncertain life is! Well today; gone tomorrow.

Almora, Feb. 26, [Undated]

Interest in Swamiji

I think if you had invited Tantine to tea, she would have very gladly accepted. She can be very simple, and is happy if only you talk of Swamiji. You could have told her so much.

Almora, March 31, 1935

[Evidently Ujjvala, who was then living in Los Angeles, must have been somewhat intimidated by Tantine's imposing personality. However, before this previous letter extract reached her, she had gathered enough courage to ask Swami Prabhavananda if

he thought Tantine would like to lunch out at Lucca's. The swami thought she might and arranged a luncheon gathering with Tantine, Ujjvala, Sister (Mrs. Wyckoff), Amiya (a resident at the Vedanta Home), and himself. Ujjvala, in an unpublished letter to Gurudas Maharaj, dated April 1, 1935, described the event:

"She was delightful at lunch, could eat very little, as she suffers from acidity, but enjoyed everything, and talked all the time, entertaining the rest of us, with stories about Swamiji and various experiences she has had. She takes an interest in everybody, wanted to know all about H's [Haridas] early life and how he came to this country, and when and how he became interested in Vedanta, and then the same about me, and that brought Miss Bell into the conversation, and Tantine immediately wanted to know all about her, and where she was, and then said, 'Can't we go to see her right now?' We had made other plans, to take her to see 'The Unfinished Symphony,' an English movie, the life of Schubert, using the melodies of his own unfinished symphony, and said to be a marvelous production. But of course we dropped them and drove out to the Country farm, rather Rancho Los Amigos, as it is called. We found Miss Bell in bed with a slight cold, but most delighted to see us, and Tantine and she had a nice talk: Tantine said she would go miles to see anyone who had known Swamiji."]

Tantine is off to Buenos Aires (South America) to visit the swami [Vijayananda] there. She will be in her element, creating new interest in Swamiji.

I hear that the sister of Nivedita in England is writing N.'s life.

Almora, June 26, 1937

"Look Out"

There are no letters to answer and there is no news, so I'll write about Tantine again and quote from her letter to Mrs. C. [Cooke]. I don't know if you are interested. I am, as there is

always something fine in her letters, and I like her enthusiasm and will to live and to see the best in everyone. She has a beautiful mental background. Swamiji has given her something that is eternal. She writes from Buenos Aires, August 4th:

> I am sailing next Saturday for New York, on the fine 21,000-ton ship *Pan American*, reaching there August 25th. This gives me a full six weeks in the Catskill mountains before it gets cold for woolies.
>
> My three weeks here has been perfect—such a welcome hospitality and, above all, to see the growth in the swami and the center of fifty noble, fine devoted friends. It was well worth coming for. I've heard one of his talks in English—beautiful, modest, sincere. And tomorrow I hear another. Then I'm off.
>
> Well, you may be circumscribed physically now, but you have seen and lived a thing or two, haven't you. How little one knows what a step will lead us to! "You will get what you want," said Swamiji, "but look out!" My joy in my physical freedom remains unabated, yet I'm bound in body and mind all the same. Our ship stops at Trinidad. All love. Keep a stout heart, knowing you *are* the Lord. Bless you.

Almora, August 27, 1937

Professor Hocking

Tantine is in England. She sailed on the *S.S. Bremen*, a 5-days' trip. On the steamer were Prof. and Mrs. Hocking—the head of Harvard Philosophy dept., old friends of Tantine.* She invited them to tea in London. His book *The Meaning of God in Human Experience* some years ago, gave him offers from 7 universities. He chose Harvard. T. writes: "He is no more sectarian than Swamiji. All life is his province: no clipping of wings to get into anybody else's ideas of God."

Almora, January 29, 1938

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*Professor Hocking met Swamiji.

Seawater Injections

Tantine is still in Paris. The latest is that she takes twice a week the Quinton seawater injections with good results; especially her digestion is much better. Seawater, she writes, contains 45 known different ingredients, including gold, iron, and iodine. It seems a Dr. Quinton began this new cure for emaciated children in Paris. When a friend told Tantine that it was risky to experiment in old age, T. replied, "You call me old? I'm only 43, that is, it is 43 years ago that I met Swamiji and I really began to live." Isn't that like her? It is not painful, she writes. The swami [Siddheswarananda] brought Paul Brunton to meet her. "A quiet, shyish, small man, Jewish father, English mother. His latest book (the one I sent you) went through 4 editions in 6 months' time. He comes to see the Swami so he can write of the authentic spiritual teachings." T. is all enthusiasm.

Almora, March 19, 1938

"This World Belongs to the Lord"

First Tantine's letter which I have to send back to Mrs. C. [Cooke]. She writes:

> I have hurt the muscles under my left knee by a fall, so I cannot use that leg, and I am in bed here (Paris) for an indefinite time instead of off to Greece. I have slept and eaten normally. I have many visitors, yesterday I had eleven, including the Swami [Siddheswarananda]. I am sure this utter rest will do me good. Immediately when I fell at Cook's, I took a taxi to Alberta* and lying on the sofa I had 5 guests to tea there, instead of at my hotel. I like new people and their contributions, especially if they differ from me. When someone asked me how I protect myself against those I don't want to see, I said, "I stop. This world belongs to the Lord, not to me. My job is to take care of myself." By nature I am thrifty, I love saving, I love equally to give away what I have saved. It is all a game, but I don't give to those who are not thrifty. That's

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*Alberta Sturges became the Countess of Sandwich.

my limitation. I let everyone solve his own problems. I solve my own. I want no sympathy. So your husband is going with you on your vacation to save your reputation (as a married woman) and his. Good. Reputation is not to be neglected, but character is more important.

Almora, April 16, 1938

Forty-Three Years Ago

Tantine writes that her knee is getting better. Next month she hopes to go to Aegina, an island one and a half hours by sea from Piraeus, the port of Athens. She is waiting for the swami [Siddheswarananda] to return from his fortnight in Switzerland, where he made a great impression on R. Rolland. "My real life began," she writes, "forty-three years ago. And though my strength of body is in abeyance, my keenness to learn remains unimpaired, and everybody teaches me something. When I asked my Swedish masseur what was the outstanding thing he had learned in life, he said, 'The lack of common sense in people,' so now I'm watching to see if that is true of me."

Almora, May 4, 1938

A Grand Party

Tantine is in England. She had a grand party of 120 guests. The guests came from Cambridge, 16 miles away, where the Congress of Faiths meetings are held under Sir Francis Younghusband. Tantine goes to these meetings.

Almora, July 11, 1938

A Series of Friendships

Tantine writes:

I have my pet economies—which I enjoy. They lead to an increase in my savings, which gives me the liberty to make gifts to old or new friends. This is my life—a series of friendships. Nothing is permanent but the Lord. Yester-

day was the 36th anniversary of Swamiji's death and that I still have him as the centre of my life is what amazes me. But he is.

She is still in England, but I hear that she may possibly come to India this winter with a friend.

Almora, July 19, 1938

White Ants

Tantine is expected here (Almora) on the 6th of October. Mrs. C. has been keeping all her letters for years thinking they might be useful should anyone want to write her biography. And now she discovers that white ants have destroyed the lot. Tantine, hearing of it, writes: "I'm so sorry since you prized them. Instead I'm sending enclosed 2 or 3 long hairs—perhaps they knew Swamiji—which came off my head this morning." I think it is awfully funny, but she gives it a nice turn. Everything in her life is connected with Swamiji. Mrs. C. writes: "I was so deeply touched by her sending her hair, dear Tantine. Even if it is *maya*, human love is the best there is in it."

Almora, September 6, 1938

An Animated Talk

Tantine arrived here on October 6. She is still here waiting for the plains to get cooler. It is still terribly hot in the plains. She is staying with the Boshis [the Boshi Sens]. Her face very much wrinkled, hair white, eyes (light blue) look faded, but she is still all there—imperial looking, enthusiastic, considerable energy and strength left, though a little wobbly on her feet. She usually takes someone's support when she walks. She came here straight from Bombay, changing trains twice, then five and a half hours in a car. She arrived at 3 P.M. Most people would have called it a day. But lo and behold, at 5 P.M. she was in the car again to see Uday Shankar's place.* The

*Uday Shankar, one of the great teachers and performers of classical Indian dance, had his school in Almora.

following day she went in a car to see the Brewsters, and again in a *dandi* [palanquin] to Bhakti and the Dept. Commissioner. The following day, supper at Shankar's place. And so it goes. On the 11th, we all (from the ashrama) went to her at 10 A.M., as all the *sadhus* wanted to meet her and hear her talk on Swamiji. She talked without any interruption for about 40 minutes. Animated talk with gestures and facial expressions. Emphatic, admonishing the *sadhus* not to be idle, but to be up and doing, she said "Work is religion! Do something, I don't care what it is. Use your hands, your brains. Swamiji said, 'To learn is religion.' He learned every day. He was different every day. Always fresh, throwing out new ideas. Learn and work. What have you learned since yesterday? (pointing a finger at one after the other, but fortunately not waiting for a reply). India wants you, the world wants you. Preach Swamiji through work. Uphold Swamiji's banner," etc.

Then she told some stories about Swamiji. "Do you see these snow ranges? One day, 40 years ago, Swamiji one morning in one of those houses here (Almora) was standing on the veranda looking at these very mountains. A telegram came for him. I handed it to him. He opened the telegram, read it, let it drop from his hand, and stood silent. After some time he turned to me and said, 'Jo, Goodwin is dead. Now my public utterance is finished.' He loved Goodwin and Goodwin was his slave. We engaged him in N.Y. to report Swamiji's lectures. After one week he refused to accept any salary. He said, 'If Swamiji can give his life to us, I at least can give my labor to him.' He followed Swamiji till his death." Well, the whole talk was strong and inspiring. It took place in Boshi's garden. Bhakti also was there.

I see Tantine almost daily for a few minutes. On the 11th, she came in *dandi* to our ashrama with the Boshis to see our typhoid patient who is now recovering. She told everyone to leave the room, she wanted to be alone with him. She talked to him without a break for half an hour. From here they went to a dinner party.

Almora, October 15, 1938

A Dream

She [Tantine] tells an interesting story about herself. When she was a child, she had a dream. She dreamt that in a certain spot in their garden, gold was to be found by digging. When she awoke in the early morning she got up, went to the kitchen, took the biggest spoon she could find, and began to dig in the place she had seen in the dream. And there she found a little piece of a broken gold earring. And that, she says, taught her always to look for gold (the best) in everyone and everything. "I don't want to hear about people's faults," she says. "I want to know their good, strong points. Swamiji always brought out the best there is in a person. That was his way of helping them. He didn't allow anyone to lean on him. 'Stand on your own feet,' he would say, 'on your own strength.'" She will probably be here another week; then one day with Mrs. Cooke; then Benares to meet Nikhilananda and his 2 lady students; then Belur Math for the winter. Bhakti sees Tantine now and then.

Almora, October 15, 1938

Her "Play"

Tantine went to see Mrs. Cooke. Mrs C. writes:

Tantine has left—a joyous dancing whirlwind! She gave me the whole picture of her "play" with you there in Almora. I relived it all and felt so close to you all there. She's so vivid and vital and sweeping. The closer she comes to the veil of death, the more vivid and vital she seems. She senses her own lack of physical strength and said, "I may never get to Calcutta." Then she added, "Or I may live another 20 years." She seemed to love my home and found it beautiful. She was thoroughly delighted. I gave her a beautiful girl to play with and she told her stories of Swamiji. And the child "fell" for her, of course—all adoration. And so Tantine played and had her fun, and I think was happy. Now when are you coming?

Dehra Dun, October 30, 1938

"Just Around the Corner"

Tantine is leaving Bombay today for England. So Bhakti is the only woman at the Math now.

Mrs. C. writes about Tantine. It will interest you. She writes:

Dear Tantine, she has helped and loved many, and no one has "caught" her. Not even Swamiji. She plays with the world as her toy. And plays with the Lord. Really she is a great lover, though she imagines that she is a *jnani*. She loved Swamiji but always danced one step ahead of him. He never changed her external life. She loved and played and went her own sweet way—the way that suited her own game. *Shakti*—the dancing Kali. And Shiva not even able to catch her dancing feet. I hope they will put her photo in the Math. Never shall I forget her ringing voice to a most humble devoted audience, "Swamiji cleaned my shoes!" That is Tantine. And yet, watch her slip away to Swamiji's room and shut the door. What is she thinking and doing there, all alone, with no audience! She is fooling us all, dear Tantine. What a memory for the Math she'll be. Who, I wonder, will write her life! Who ever knew her! I guess Swamiji knew her best, as Turiyananda knew you best. I am glad I have loved you both. Don't hurry off too soon. I'm still needing you, your gentleness and Tantine's strength. You must remember that Tantine always says, "I'm not Swamiji's disciple. I was his friend. I never asked him a question. I never asked him for anything." The other day only I heard her say, "I feel as if Swamiji is just around the corner." She was speaking about Swamiji, and told some nice stories. Once Swamiji was lecturing in New York. He was at his best and the audience seemed to be in a rapture. There was not a sound, they hung on his lips. Then suddenly he stopped, bowed to the audience of, perhaps, a thousand people, and left the platform. It was so abrupt that the audience wondered what had happened to him. Later Tantine asked him. Swamiji replied, "I felt such an inflow of strength and power that had I continued, it would have spoiled my message. All these people would have become my disciples. I don't want disciples. I want everyone to get free by their own efforts." Tantine once

asked Nivedita what Swamiji stood for. She said, "Renunciation." Mrs. Sevier, when asked, said "Union." "To me," Tantine said, "he stood for Freedom."

Kishenpur, March 11, 1939

In Los Angeles

I'm quite excited. Tantine is in Los Angeles. She writes on June 15:

> Here I am since three days visiting Mrs. Hastings in her lovely home overlooking L.A., Hollywood on the south and Griffith Park, four miles of mountains and forest, she owning one half acre of land on top of the hill—it being 65 steps up from her garage to the house by foot. I've only been down once. But today and from now on, I go every day to some engagement. Today at 4, a reception is being given to me by the fine, gentle Swami Prabhavananda, and on Sunday I am to speak instead of him at the beautiful Vedanta Temple—the gift of Mrs. W. [Wyckoff], one of three sisters who came to see Swamiji in 1899, when he and I were visiting beloved Mrs. Blodgett, at whose house my brother died. I stay in bed mornings and continue my twenty-minute to half-hour meditation in bed. I will stay here at least one week. Everyone wants to hear my reminiscences of Swamiji, so I'm happy. The climate is divine —never over 80 degrees.

The reception, I'm afraid, you couldn't attend, but I hope you heard her talk, and you or someone took shorthand notes (she may not have allowed that). I would love to see them if available. And I'm anxiously awaiting your report. June 24th, she writes from San Francisco:

> I'm taking a day off in bed today, staying with lovely and beloved Mrs. Verdier since four days, after eight days in L.A. Here the Swami Ashokananda I've heard already twice. Mrs. Verdier is going three times a week. And next Friday night I'm going to give my reminiscences of

Swamiji, as I did in L.A. There is another swami in Portland, Oregon, so as my return ticket includes Portland, I'm likely to go there too. I've seen the Fox sisters and Mrs. French, whom I knew in India. Sarah Fox lives on, faithful to what she found in India. I love not having any plans, making new friends, expanding on new lines, with *wonder* as the basis of life.

What a blessed old age Tantine has! Financially independent, health and strength enough to do and go as she pleases, her mind fresh and enthusiastic, no ties, a life dedicated to serve Swamiji, a loving and kind heart.

Almora, July 15, 1939

What the Lord Has up His Sleeve

Tantine writes, Dec. 13:

I am here in this comfy hotel (in New York), 18th floor, with all my physical needs met—and the intellectual and spiritual as well.

You (Mrs. Cooke) have experimented in marriage again though you thought you would be a nun. I, who plan nothing—just live from day to day, hour to hour—wonder what the Lord has up His sleeve next for his Joya (Tantine).

Not a jot or a tittle has been changed in my attitude toward Swamiji of 45 years, though I have been looking all this time to see anyone who even came into his category. Last Sunday I met a man who was Trade Commissioner to our U.S.A. Consul in Calcutta. He said quietly to me, "I am a disciple of Vivekananda whom I met and studied with in 1893, when he was Mrs. Ole Bull's guest." And I had no idea he ever met Swamiji. I said, "I lived with him 7 years, but never became a disciple." In any case, I'm having a grand time in New York.

Swamiji's birthday anniversary is being celebrated here. Public meeting, feeding of the poor, etc. So everyone is busy.

Kankhal, February 3, 1940

"Destiny"

[In the following letter extract, Tantine alluded freely to her future death. Furthermore, in one of Gurudas Maharaj's unpublished letters to Ujjvala (undated), Gurudas Maharaj quoted a portion of a letter from Tantine, which further expressed her untroubled attitude toward death:

"Tantine going here and there. She went back to New York and to daily Town Hall lectures, luncheons, etc. She writes: 'I have learned to "wait and see." So many things solve themselves if you will give time enough. Any and everything is fun with those who love.'

"About death she writes: 'The Readiness is all! and not to hang on to a body worn out or diseased. The permanent is already within us. "Know ye not that ye are the sons of God?" and that is the thing to remember, I think. People say, "Why talk of death?" as if it were a curse instead of a blessing, when it comes. Why not recognize it, the Inevitable? I would like to die away from family or friends, for death is—must be—a great experience, and to be watched for each breath must be diverting for the one undergoing the experience, don't you think so?' I think T. is right, but here they do not. Of course, they chant the name of God which may be helpful in some cases. Who knows?"]

First, Tantine's letter from her New York hotel, March 17:

I saw a modern Russian ballet, in which "Destiny," a tall beautiful unsmiling woman follows one of the actors, even into prison—he, calling out frequently, "I want to resign." Instead of "Destiny" being formidable, I love to think that Nivedita was right when she defined it as "Opportunity." Every day we are making our own—making our destiny. Mine occurred 45 years ago on Jan. 29, when I recognized Swamiji, or, as beloved Drogo put it when he was five years old, "I mean the day Tantine found her own soul." So true, yet only a child could put it so clearly.

Today I received from Rosehill Cemetery in Chicago, the exact number of our plot of land where my father and mother are buried, for I think I'll have my ashes put there.

What could be more appropriate than to be in the same city where Swamiji broadcast His message in 1893? Each day brings something new—unprepared, and to face these new conditions keeps one alert and alive.

You are wonderful—living in our secluded sanctuary, keeping the flame alive. Yet, you may be doing more than any of us busy-bodies. In any case I admire your grit and resourcefulness.

Kankhal, March 6, 1940

Swamiji's Workers

Miss MacLeod writes on 29 July, from the Martha Washington Inn at Abington, Virginia:

> Our nice Swami Prabhavananda in Hollywood has been given a lovely orange ranch in California as an Ashrama, the fruit of which will support him in security. So the Lord is providing gradually permanent centers for Swamiji's workers. And Swami Vijayananda has moved 20 miles out of Buenos Aires (Argentina) in his own home and garden too.

I had not heard of this. Tantine is sending the *Reader's Digest* to Margaret Wilson in India. She is the daughter of the late president and lives in Aurobindo Ghosh's Ashrama.

Barlowganj, November 1, 1941

Tantine's Death

[Josephine MacLeod's health had failed markedly toward the end of her life. Hearing of this, Swami Prabhavananda invited Tantine to come and live at the Vedanta Home, where she would receive the daily care she required. Tantine came to stay and subsequently passed away at the Vedanta Society of Southern California, in Hollywood. However, on October 11, 1949—just a week prior to her passing—Swami Prabhavananda had left America with four of his monastic disciples on an Indian pilgrimage.]

We heard about Tantine's death on the 18th, from Belur Math. The cable they had received made the time of her death 11 o'clock. You make it 1 A.M. Tantine had an eventful life and during trying conditions she has been of invaluable service to our Mission, interceding with high officials and straightening out misunderstandings. I saw her last at Almora where she was the Boshis' [Boshi Sens's] guest. The last few days she must have fretted much being dependent on others! But she was unconscious much of the time. The news will be a shock to the swami who had just left. But though one feels the loss, one cannot feel sorry for her. How strange, in such a short time, so many gone. Here the general reaction is "Now she is with Swamiji." Anyhow it is good to think so.

The place must be terribly empty with so many gone.

Barlowganj, October 21, 1949

27

SISTER CHRISTINE

[Sister Christine (1866-1930) was a beloved disciple of Swami Vivekananda, whom she met in Detroit in 1894. A little more than a year later, upon hearing that the swami was at Thousand Island Park, Christine and her friend Mrs. Funke arrived at his doorstep in the rain with the words: "We have come, just as we would go to Jesus if he were still on earth and ask him to teach us." And they remained there along with the other students, witnesses to Swamiji's most inspired message in America.

While at Thousand Island Park, Swamiji discussed the Indian work with Christine. Thus, in April 1902, she reached Calcutta to begin the work entrusted to her by her guru. Living under austere conditions, Christine, under the direction of Swami Saradananda and Sister Nivedita, became a principal worker at the Vivekananda School—an institution designed for the education and vocational training of Indian women.

Though ill health forced Sister Christine to return to America, where she was compelled to remain ten years due to World War I, her school—the future Nivedita School—changed under new management and continued to grow. When Christine finally managed to return to India, her health again failed and it was soon apparent that she could no longer continue active service

there. However Christine continued to live in India, recording her memoirs until she left the country in 1928.

The following letter extracts begin with Sister Christine's return to India in 1920, and her work in Calcutta after ten years in America.]

The Fray

[Though the Fox sisters, after a spiritually beneficial pilgrimage to India in 1922, intended to sail for America (as of February 1924), Swami Saradananda encouraged them to remain in India as teachers at the Nivedita School. In the following letter extract, "the fray" no doubt refers to differences in opinion regarding the management of the school.]

Just this morning I got their letter. It seems Sister Christine, who had just returned after many years, is not well and disappointed and disheartened and utterly out of harmony. She brought a young girl to assist her at the school who does not like India at all and refuses to adapt herself to circumstances. So Swami Saradananda and others are urging the girls not to buy their passage just yet—to wait and see how things turn out. The girls are not at all anxious to get mixed up in the fray or to do anything that might be displeasing to Christine. They have not the least desire to have anything to do with the school. They are ready to come home. Now let us see what happens.

Kankhal, February 3, 1924

Twenty-One Weeks in Bed

[In the following extracts, we receive a clear impression of the health problems and suffering Sister Christine endured due to her devotion to Swamiji and India. Boshi Sen, in his article in the Prabuddha Bharata, *dated September 1930, commented:*

"None of the Western disciples who have come to India, has had to face what she did. Yet when one felt sorry for her, she would say: 'Would I have had it different? No, a thousand times no. It is seldom that Vivekananda comes to this earth.

If I am to be born again, gladly will I endure a thousand times the hardships of this life for the privilege that has been mine.'"]

Sister Christine is quite ill at Calcutta. She said she got ill eating bazaar-made food. She has ulcerated intestinal trouble, is very nervous, and has a troublesome heart. She may go home with the girls. Imagine, she has been 21 weeks in bed, and is still running a temperature of 103 degrees!

Benares, November 23, 1925

An Interesting Talker

In my letters to Gopi, I have told all about the Brewsters, Boshi, and Sister Christine. I don't see them very often—about once in three days. It is a long climb from our ashrama to their bungalow. I usually go in the morning when Christine and Boshi have breakfast together at 8:30. And I have a cup of coffee with them.

Sister Christine, who is an interesting talker, said this morning (speaking about the different people who had come to India), "I would never ask anyone to come to India. After a while they all get homesick, but don't know it. Then they look upon the West as perfect, and everything in India is criticized, and, of course, they are unhappy. To come to India is like being reborn in a different country. I would advise it to no one." I fully agree that that is the only safe stand to take, especially if one has not a home of one's own to invite friends to. And even then, an Indian home can never be like a Western home. *Everything* is too different.

Almora, July 10, 1926

The Party Is Breaking up

Boshi is here now with Sister Christine. They are great friends. She lives in his home when she is in Calcutta. She has severed all connections with the Nivedita School (difference of opinion with the authorities of the school). Rather sad as she did all the hard work when the school was started. She was in charge for many years, though nominally Nivedita was at the

head. Nivedita, however, spent all her time writing her books. They don't seem to care for foreigners at the school anymore. Anyhow, Christine for the last two years has not been in a condition to do any work. She has been in bed most of the time. She has gained in strength here, but still is not able to walk except from room to room.

The party is now breaking up. Tantine has left two weeks ago, and the others are going down together as far as Agra to see the Taj, and then Christine and Boshi will go to Benares and the Brewsters will go to visit Indian friends. I will miss them here. I enjoyed my daily breakfast with them. The Brewsters are lovely people. They care for the Indian ideals. The Himalayas they consider—even from here—superior to any of the Alps or other mountain ranges in Europe. Their leaving India has also its regrets. But the physical difficulties are many here. In Italy they feel at home, they know the language and the people, and they leave their friends there. All this is *maya*!

Almora, November 9, 1926

What a Blessing

We live in a marvelous period, materially and spiritually. Think of it—to have been born in Sri Ramakrishna's and Vivekananda's time. Only this morning at breakfast Sister C. said, "What a blessing to have been born and to have met Swamiji. But, oh, how little ready I was for that marvelous man. It has taken me twenty-five years to appreciate him better." She still gets as excited when she speaks of Swamiji, as if she had been with him an hour ago. It is most interesting to hear her talk. She was with him at Thousand Island Park and in Detroit. And he asked her to come to India to help Nivedita.

I hope sometime we will see her experiences in print. She is writing something, but does not show it. She says she may change it, and wants to finish it before she decides what to do with it. She keeps up her enthusiasm, as Miss MacLeod does and Mrs. Sevier and, in fact, most of Swamiji's disciples. Mrs. Funke, who had just passed away, kept her enthusiasm for him to the last, though she was over seventy and paralyzed. She

and Christine went to Thousand Island Park together. You may remember Mrs. Funke's beautiful account of it in *Inspired Talks*. And, of course, you know how Frank R. [Rhodehamel] was when he spoke of Swamiji. And now there are only a few left of Sri Ramakrishna's first disciples.

Almora, December 12, 1927

In Her Memory

Day before yesterday was Sister Christine's birthday. Boshi gave a little dinner at the ashrama in her memory. He and Gertrude came but did not eat with us. In the evening Ram Maharaj, Dr. D. P. Ghose (who is visiting with us), and I had supper with the Boshis. After supper Boshi read some of Christine's writings to us about Swamiji. She looked upon Swamiji as a free soul who had come from some higher sphere for a special purpose—to show the way to God-realization.

Almora, August 20, 1939

28

INDIA

Each Center Has Its Peculiar Attractions

Life here is again different from life at the Math, and so has each center its peculiar attractions. In Benares one lives as in a different world, and so again at Puri, with its most holy temple and mighty ocean. And again, the villages so quiet—a few clay huts among palm trees—have an attraction of their own. At Rishikesh one sees the Ganges emerge from the Himalayas, and one is impressed with its loftiness and purity. It is no wonder that all these places have become places of pilgrimage. Nature is there at her grandest and mightiest. And it is there that one feels the holiness of this land. It charms and fascinates beyond imagination.

Prabuddha Bharata Office
[Mayavati], September 14, 1902

Belur Math

A Visit to Belur Math

[The following inclusion is an article by Gurudas Maharaj, written for the Prabuddha Bharata, *in January 1907.]*

their obedience there is no questioning. They love the swamis, they admire them—and that is expressed in their actions. To live with the swamis is a privilege which they appreciate.

To describe the life of the monks here can be done in a few words. Having realized the divinity within, knowing themselves to be the witness of all that takes place, knowing the mind and the body to act while the true Self never acts, they offer up whatever is connected with their external and mental life to the Lord of all, and they serve Him through His manifestations in the whole of humanity. In other words, their life has become a life of service in whatever form that may be. When living in the Math, they may do such work as has to be done there. When called elsewhere, they may answer such call—be it to nurse the sick, bring food to the famine-stricken, instruct those who ask for spiritual advice, give shelter to the destitute, or bring to other nations the glorious teaching of Vedanta of which they stand so much in need. And all this is done without any personal considerations. The question will be discussed whether or not the help is needed. This being decided in the affirmative, the person best fitted for the work will be selected; and then without further questioning or delay, the work is executed.

Understanding the life of the *sannyasin*, we will then not be disappointed to find their life devoid of much external show of religious sentiment as far as ceremonies are concerned. Religion is to be practiced every moment of the day—never to leave our life, no matter in what we may be occupied. During eating or working or resting or play—nay, even during sleep—the mind should be fixed on God. Such is the teaching. We need therefore not to mistake the cheerful countenance and hearty laugh for a worldly state of mind.

Still, when external practices and means are helpful to bring about the realization of one's ideal, such means are not rejected. And an opportunity to satisfy the devotional yearning of the devotee is found in the little chapel, where a simple ceremony is performed every morning and evening. Some flowers gathered in the garden are offered to the deity. But the flowers stand only as a symbol for every act, every thought. So also the food is put on the altar of the Divine. And here God is worshipped not in a sectarian way, but first of all as

that all-pervading Universal Being, and then in His different incarnations. And when the worshipper places one of the flowers on his own heart, he meditates on that same deity as residing in his heart.

Such then is the life here. There is in it much of grace, much of sweetness—a spirit of gentleness which one meets at all times. How quietly it works—imperceptibly, except in its results. A simple, cheerful, holy life—a life of service and devotion, a life of love for God and man.

It is then not strange that many flock to this beautiful place on the Ganges side. In easy reach from Calcutta, they spend their hours of leisure in the company of the swamis. And especially on Sundays, we may find little groups of men in conversation or singing those beautiful Bengali hymns, full of devotion and feeling.

There may not be so much of austerity here, but there is the constant withdrawing from the little self and a centering in the Divine. And the heart becomes pure and simple and loving. This is what draws so many to the Belur Math and what fills their hearts with love for the Lord and His holy workers; and they return to their respective duties, strengthened and encouraged and filled with a determination also to reach the goal.

Vedanta stands for freedom, and that principle is carried out in the Math. All are welcome who are sincere. The meanest—the lowest—finds a place in the hearts of these monks. And never does one call for help in vain.

Swamiji's Birthday and Boshi Sen

[The reference to American women in the following extract refers to Helen Rubel, who offered a substantial sum of money for the construction of Sri Ramakrishna's temple at Belur Math.]

The Boshis are still in Calcutta. Boshi cooked an elaborate dinner to offer to Swamiji on Swamiji's birthday. They prepared it at their home and took it in a boat to the Math to be offered. Many meat and fish preparations, coffee and rolls, peaches and whipped cream, and whatnot. They left Calcutta

at 7 P.M. and returned at 10 P.M., both ways making use of the rivertide. Otherwise it takes a long time in rowboats. There was a very large number of cars at the Math that day. It was difficult to find a place to park the cars. And now with the new temple, more people will be going to the Math. Thus the problems of managing things at the Math increase. But, as Boshi writes, "Thakur must want it, otherwise why should American women spend such a fortune for a temple?"

Almora, January 29, 1938

An Old Man Who Saw Thakur

At Belur Math there will be no extra public celebration on Sri Ramakrishna's birthday. Only the real birthday will be observed. You know, hundreds of thousands of people now do come every year on the public celebration. Bhakti [Helen Rubel] is about the same. She writes that she had met an old man who had seen Thakur. The man was a young boy then. He had gone to a Brahmo meeting in Calcutta where Sri Ramakrishna was talking much with some devotees. Then Hriday, his nephew, came several times to say that it was time to go back to Dakshineswar. Finally he came and said that the carriage could not wait any longer. Then Thakur said, turning on him, "Am I to be a slave to a carriage!" and went on talking until he was finished. It was to this man's father that Thakur said, "This world is like an onion. Go on analyzing it, and nothing remains."

Kankhal, February 4, 1942

Mayavati

Mother Sevier . . .

[Captain and Mrs. J. H. Sevier, English disciples of Swami Vivekananda, accompanied the swami to India in 1896, and there remained, dedicating their lives to his work. In 1898, inspired by Swamiji's plan for an Advaita Ashrama, they bought the land for Mayavati, and lived there in order to firmly establish it as a center. After her husband's demise on October 28, 1900,

Mrs. Sevier continued to live at Mayavati in a cottage separate from the monastery, till May 1915, whereupon she took up a brief residence near Shyamala Tal till she returned to England.

In an unpublished letter to Mira, dated September 3, 1915, Gurudas Maharaj wrote about Mrs. Sevier's departure from Mayavati:

"Everybody, myself included, thought that the place would go to pieces if Mrs. Sevier left. But I now believe that it will go on just as well and, perhaps, better without her. This does not mean anything unkind to Mrs. Sevier. You know what I think of her. She *made the place. No one else could have done it. But there is a time for everything and everybody, a time that we must step aside and let others take our place. And if we do not step aside, then we are pushed aside. That is all there is about it. I mean, a higher power or the law or the Lord, whatever it be, simply removes us and replaces us. And he who trusts in the Lord and is willing to let Him have His own way, will be removed without much disturbance. They will take the hint, and they will be quite satisfied wherever they are put. They need not worry and fuss. When the call comes, they are ready either to come or to go. Is it not a blessing to feel that He leads us—that we do not have to plan with self-interest?"*

The following letter extract describes Gurudas Maharaj's first impressions of "Mother," as she was called.]

This ashrama is by far the place best suited for those who come from the West, but that does not mean that I may not be placed under more unfavorable conditions. Anyhow it looks at present very much as if my life here shall be a life of action, more than of quiet and retirement. Here I am correcting proofs for *Prabuddha Bharata* and Swamiji's books. But it leaves enough time for other things.

It is a very beautiful place here. There are here three swamis and one *brahmacharin* besides myself. Mrs. Sevier is "Mother" (as she is called) and a very exceptional woman. The more I know of her, the more I admire her. With a very sweet, loving nature she combines great strength, tact, and wisdom.

She lives here all alone. I wished she had someone with her as a congenial companion, but she seems quite satisfied.

Mayavati, May 10, 1907

. . . And Others

I have been in Mayavati now about two weeks. First, I suffered from fever, but now I am feeling much better for the change, and I hope soon to be O.K. again. I met here Nivedita, Sister Christine, and Dr. and Mrs. Bose. Dr. Bose is the greatest scientist in India. He established the fact that plants respond to external stimulus. I liked Nivedita better than I did before. Of course, Christine is of a much milder type, and one feels more at ease with her. They have all left yesterday except Christine. When she came back from America last spring, she brought a young American journalist with her. He will be up soon. I hear he is very clever. Mrs. Sevier has been much benefited by her two-years' stay abroad. She is very kind to me. She is 63, but very active and lively and quite a personality—a woman of great tact and *savoir faire*.

Mayavati, June 28, 1911

A Life Member

I am now in fine health and very contented here, and they do not want me to leave Mayavati. They all say that I should make up my mind to be a life member here. See how things change. When I came up this time, there were new people in charge, and it was very evident that they did not want me here a bit. Perhaps they thought that I would want to rule and boss here, being the oldest member. But, you know, that is not at all my nature. So they soon discovered this, and now they are entirely changed. But I tell them I must go back to America once to see my old friends again, and then I may come back to spend my last years in India. Is that not right? However, it is all in Mother's hands. She knows our destiny. We can only do what we think right. At present I am, through Her grace, in a nice mood. May She keep me so.

Mayavati, September 24, 1918

Life Here

Life here is now flowing on smoothly, one day like the other. Of course, you want to know what we do. But that is an embarrassing question to put to a lazy fellow. I read proofs half an hour in the morning and in the evening. One swami reads the manuscript, and I have the printed copy, correcting printing mistakes. The rest of the day is mine, and I walk, read, or write letters. At present, one of the swamis, who has written a voluminous book on the life of Ramakrishna, reads the manuscript to the girls, one Madrasi gentleman who is visiting here, and myself at the little house where the girls live. He reads from 3 P.M. till 4 P.M. Then we have tea together. Then the Madrasi translates for us a long song that is sung at all our Maths twice each month. It is a kind of a resume of the Ramayana [*Ram Nam*]. The girls are learning to sing it. This takes about an hour, and then we go for a walk. The rest of the day the girls are alone with their boy. That is, they are trying to make a servant out of him. No easy task, as he is a hill boy with barbarous habits and does not know a word of English. Then the girls baked biscuits in an empty oil tin——the only oven they have. So with one thing and another they are busy. They are very happy though. This place is so beautiful and quiet. They are having a real vacation.

The only excitement here is furnished by one or more tigers, real man-eaters. We hear them sometimes in the evening, and last evening on our walk we saw the footprints of a leopard. At a little hospital three miles from here are, at present, two men who have been attacked by tigers. One week outside his hut in the night, in a little village about 4 miles from here, one was attacked. His wife came to his rescue and saved his life. The other was alone, sound asleep in his hut that had no door, when he was awakened by a terrible blow on his face, which tore it open and broke the jawbone. Then the creature fled. When he was brought to the hospital, the doctor removed some pieces of bone and treated the wounds. He did not expect him to live, but injected strychnine several times to keep the heart acting. When he came to see him the following morning, he found the man in an outhouse cooking his meal. So he thinks he may live after all. It is believed that only those tigers who have tasted human flesh once turn into man-eaters,

or old tigers who cannot get deer anymore. So that is all the news this time.

Mayavati, April 29, 1923

Mrs. Cooke

We are now in the rainy season, showers almost every day, and the air soft and lovely with beautiful sunsets. The girls love the place, like it better every day. And they seem to be keeping pretty good health. They could have gone to Calcutta to help in the Nivedita School. But they wanted to be here a little longer, till the weather becomes cold and it will be pleasant in Calcutta. So they may go down in Oct. or Nov. But nothing is settled.

We expect a Mrs. Cooke here in Sept. She is born in India of English parents, loves India and the Ramakrishna Mission. Her husband is going to England to take the children to a school there. So Mrs. Cooke will be alone. She seems to be a capable, pleasant woman with a good dose of sentiment. But we will know more about her when she is here. The girls rather like the idea of her coming. She can teach them many things about life here and how to do things. For things are done differently here—just imagine the girls baking cakes in an empty kerosene can over a smoky wood fire.

The girls are interested in everything—birds, plants, and jungle life. Just now green parrots are visiting our orchard and doing full justice to our apples. You have heard from others about the tiger that was shot 3 miles from Mayavati and about the goat being killed in our orchard by a leopard. That is about all the excitement we have had.

Mayavati, July 22, 1923

Almora

Swami Turiyananda's Little Ashrama

I am now in Swami Turiyananda's little ashrama. The Ramakrishna Kutir is a two-storied, four-roomed structure, clinging to the side of a hill, a little below the main road and

one mile from Almora. We are 5 of us here besides the servant. And I have a comfortable room with a veranda on the second storey, next to the room that is kept for Swami Turiyananda and all his worldly goods—his bedstead, blankets, slippers, clothing, books, beads, *kamandalu*, etc. I don't care much for such old *samskaras* [memories], but *bhaktas* like these things. Light and incense are placed in the room mornings and evenings. And a little food is usually offered. The $5 you sent will go towards keeping up the good work. You know, the money I collected was donated to this place, as there was no fund to keep it going. Even now some of the monks go daily to beg their food.

We are only 50 miles from Mayavati; but there is no cart road, so it takes two and a half days to get there for a good walker. The scenery is lovely—valleys and mountains—and there are fine roads and lovely paths in the pine woods where I wander alone in the mornings and evenings. The hill people are not nearly so picturesque as the people of the plains in their gorgeous colors. Still, everything Indian has its own interest for foreigners.

Old Thomas was right when he wrote: "Shall the eye be ever satisfied by seeing, or the ear by hearing?" One realizes it in India where one begins to live a new sense-life all over again. Everything is new, strange, interesting, different. Adding to this adjustment and readjustment, wherever one goes the mind is kept pretty busy on the external plane, even in "spiritual India." Spirituality is not inhaled from the atmosphere even here, nor have I found any guru who pours it down one's throat. I always come back to the same conclusion—that a strong desire and determination are the only things that count. The rest is merely on the way. And I believe, for the sincere man America offers opportunities, the same as any other country. But we all need our experiences. Then, at last, we will understand that Swamiji was right when he said, "Thine only is the hand that holds thee down" and "In church and temple vain thy search."* He might have added, "In this country or that, in this guru or that."

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*Both of Gurudas Maharaj's quotations are paraphrases from Swami Vivekananda's *The Song of the Sannyasin*.

No, I believe only in the God within. He alone is true; the rest is *maya*. If we can go to Him, all is well. If not, no one can take us there. And the way, we know. No one need teach us that. It is all in the *doing*. We know too much already. Mason [a member of the Lord's Farm] knew nothing, had no guru, but he got the real thing, the pearl of great price hidden within his own heart. That is all the religion I believe in. And that is soon told and not a very good basis to start a Vedanta Society on, is it? So forget all about my starting Societies or teaching. "Beneath the ocean's depth, above the vaulted sky, I searched for God. At last I searched myself, my inner 'my,' and found Him there." That is all I would have to teach. But that is a rather short sermon to hold audiences.

Almora, April 28, 1924

The India I Love

The *Four Square* magazines you sent, I forwarded to my youngest sister in Holland. I thought she might enjoy them as she was in bed suffering from extreme weakness, and my eldest sister, who was visiting her, could have read them to her. But it was too late. She slipped away with the inner assurance of a better house being prepared for her. Isn't it singular —my three sisters, all so religious like my parents and my four brothers, only the youngest left, all agnostics. Of course, the question always remains, What do you mean by "religious"? Who can read the hearts of others? If a warm, loving, generous heart counts, I need not worry about my brother. "No one who does good, Arjuna, comes to an evil end." I am a little tired of religious chatter and parroting without any depth or originality to substantiate it—big talk that leaves no impression. I get more reaction seeing a simple, ignorant, poor woman placing a flower before an idol. That is the India I love—the pilgrim places, little temples, the Ganges, the mountains, the simple folk, worship rooms. And I like the bazaars, if they are not too filthy.

India is lovely if one stands aloof, the Witness. You know how it is with beautiful scenery; if you go too near, the beauty fades. As soon as we want to identify ourselves with what we

witness, as soon as we want to become part of it, we get disappointed. A tall, well-built *sannyasin* in orange robe and turban amidst green trees or seated at the bank of a river is a sight that certainly pleases one's sense of beauty. But begin to talk with him and you throw yourself open to disappointments in most cases. There is such a thing as feeling closer to India in America than by living here. In my little room in N.Y. city, with a few pictures of the swamis on the mantelpiece and a picture of Sri Ramakrishna and one of Christ on the wall, I have been in closer touch with the soul of India than I have been anywhere here. Swami Turiyananda was right when he said, "I have given you the best India has to offer." And Nivedita probably did her best work—gave her most intimate touches of Indian life—when she was in the West. Distance lends charm. There is not the physical limitation to hamper our ideal; there is no personal reaction. Had the girls visited the [Nivedita] School a few times, they would have thought, "How charming are these Bengali girls." But they had to identify themselves with it, and they were disillusioned. I once said to Mira, "If one wants to live in India, one must die first." I meant, one must rise above being affected by the physical or personal. Give yourself to such an extent that you forget yourself in your work, or live as the Witness—"I am the Atman." Let the senses have their play, but know: "I am not that. I am Spirit. I am free." And is this not so everywhere? Let the body suffer, let the senses be attracted or repulsed, I am free! Let people praise me or blame me. Let them flatter or insult me. I am free! That is our religion. Isn't it true? And we can practice everywhere. I can be content here because I am satisfied to live alone. I stay only in those places where I can have a room to myself and don't have to come into contact with others anymore than I wish. Here even meals are brought to my room. Thus I have all the benefit of living in an ashrama without the irritations so unavoidable when living with a race brought up with different standards of conduct.

It is interesting to see the Math, Dakshineswar, Mayavati, a host of other places, to meet all the swamis. But that it makes us more spiritual, I don't think. It is too external. It may leave many pleasant and good impressions on our mind, which is good, no doubt; but that it will increase our desire to know

ourselves, that it will spur us on to make a greater effort to know the Self, I for one have yet to experience. It satisfies an unfulfilled desire, that is all. "With a little book in a little nook," to quote a Kempis—if it makes us meditative, if it warms our hearts towards God, it may do more than all our Indian experiences put together. If you expect to see us with wings, you will be disappointed. My own feeling in the whole matter is, we came because it was Mother's will. It is our *karma*. It had to be. Good or bad, She knows. It was in the scheme of our lives, a leaf turned over, a scene in the play of life.

I don't believe in anything being bad. It is all on the march. "Blessed be my sins, blessed be my mistakes," Swamiji said. "They all teach me something." We want to get the right angle on life and to give events their true value. We are always progressing towards the goal, no matter what we do or where we are. I don't believe in retrogression, no matter what the appearance may be. It is all on the way. Even a saint, if he falls, is only taking another step forward. The fall had to be. It was on the path. There is nothing to regret. Get up and go onward. Mother calls. She is waiting for us. Let us listen attentively that we may hear the call. Let our inner eye be opened that we may see Her. We may stumble, we may fall and get bruised, but who cares if we can hear the Call, if we can see the end of our struggles? And even if we don't hear or see, we will stumble along believing. There *is* an end, there *is* a haven of rest and bliss. We will all get there. It is impossible that this beastly life should run in a vicious circle without escape. There *is* an escape, there *is* a way out. We will all get free, and perhaps much sooner than we expect. The veil may rend any moment, no matter how heavy it seems. A glimpse comes when we least expect it. And it comes where we would have least looked for it, and to persons of whom we would not have expected.

Fear, worry, pity, moroseness—these, I believe, are the greatest obstacles, greater than any sin. These are like cocoons around our little self, the greatest bondages. Many a hard-headed businessman and out-and-out agnostic are nearer to being spiritual than a whining (so-called) religious

person. This is, at least, a blessing in India: people are cheerful in their religion. They do not worry about their little souls. They don't complain that they don't advance or cannot meditate or may be lost. If not in this life, then in a future life, seems to be the common thought. And those who want to put on steam, renounce the world and don't bother others with their complaints.

Another thing that I like is that people are not critical. If a monk makes a mistake, they say, "We all make mistakes. What of that?" They are much more lenient. "It is his *karma*. What is that to you?" We criticize a swami in America if he plays cards, if he smokes, if he goes to the theaters, if he does not meditate. But we can see the same things here. To cultivate a cheerful mind is one of the yoga practices—anything to get away from our little, moaning self, anything that makes us expand, that makes us feel free and buoyant.

India knows psychology. Once at Kankhal I said, "Swami A. is so quiet. Swami B. is a noisy fellow." "Yes," remarked another swami, "Swami A. is quiet on the surface, but it is all noise within. Swami B. is all noise on the surface, but quiet within." And he was right. It is no easy matter to judge others or to advise others. We are all different; we are all individual cases. For one, meditation is good, for another lots of fun. But those who can meditate are few and far between as elsewhere, believe me. But there are forms of meditation that are easier: a tramp in the country, a wholesome show, a good book when it makes us think of the Atman, when it makes us feel freer.

The only thing they despise here is sanctimoniousness. And a man may spend hours daily in meditation, but if he is gloomy, no one has any use for him. It shows two things: first, that his meditations don't amount to anything; second, that he is selfish, thinking of himself all the time. It is the jolly, laughing, singing, talking monk who is liked here as everywhere else. Everyone avoids the sad-faced monk.

So if we have to come to India, we have to come. That is all there is about it. And if we can make our India in America—I mean, the best that India stands for—that is that. "Make your India here," Swami Turiyananda said to me at the Shanti Ashrama. But who can learn without experience? "I searched

for God with heart throbs of despair. At last, I searched myself and found him there."

Almora, July 23, 1924

The Little Monkey

[Gurudas Maharaj's reference to the girls, or the Fox sisters, was due to the fact that (as mentioned in chapter 24) after two years in India and their health beginning to break down, the sisters wanted to return to America. But upon Swami Saradananda's request, they stayed and taught at the Nivedita School till they left India in December 1925, mentally and physically exhausted.]

Yes, the conditions here are ideal if one could only make use of them. But often the more time we have, the less we do. At least, I have always found it so. And I have seen it in others.

I don't feel like encouraging or discouraging anyone to come to India. It is with everything in life—the more we expect, the greater the disappointment. All I can say is that I like this kind of life, and I don't expect anything from anybody. If I had you all here, I would never dream of going back. There are many things in India that I consider absolutely wrong and wicked, but I have nothing to do with them.

I am here as I was at the Shanti Ashrama, mentally and physically removed from public life and society. That is what I like. I love nature, whereas city life has no attractions for me. Except with you, my few friends, I have no desire to meet anyone.

So with it all, I am perfectly satisfied. The people and their customs and their picturesqueness—different at every place you go—are to me more interesting and entertaining than any show. I never seem to get tired of watching them. I always see new things to interest me, just as I do in nature. I love to see them but don't care to come in contact with them. It is all charming from a little distance, standing by as the Witness, just as I might enjoy a boxing bout but would not want to be in the ring. But newcomers want to be in the picture (or let me say, in the ring), and then they are apt to get a few blows. That

is where I could be of help to newcomers if they would want to take my advice.

But who does take anyone's advice unless it is the advice we want? It is like the little monkey I had at Kankhal. I let it free. But when I saw it again, I tempted it with food to catch it again. The mother was there, and every time the little thing came towards me, she pulled it back. But it would not be pulled back and made a break for the food and was caught.

At Almora it is peaceful and quiet—the weather perfect and the mountains beautiful. And they [the Hindus and Mohammedans] can have all the religious squabbles and fights they want, as long as they keep away from here. It does not interest me any more than politics do in the West. So there are two sides to every question, and others may disagree with me and tell an entirely different story. India has been a battlefield from time immemorial, one raja fighting another raja, or outsiders trying to take possession. And so it will go on. Then there is the usual oppression of petty native officials, bribing, flattering, and all that is included in human nature the world over. Paradise is not on this plane. But it happens that I have found in India the way to keep out of all that I don't like, which in the West I would not be able to do, so I am contented here.

The girls had a heavenly time here the first year. Then they played the little monkey trick, so it is not quite so nice now. But for that, India is not to blame. It is their own ambition. They could have had, and can still have, a heavenly time if they will do as the missionaries do who follow the advice of their own people.

Anyhow, as you say, we will all long for India again after a short time in the West. I and the girls also find a charm here difficult to define—*that* we will miss in the West. The Shanti Ashrama comes the nearest to it—except for the beastly climate, heat and cold—especially if we could live there, which seems out of the question. And there even, one has to put up with food cranks. But there is for me not the same free, easy, independent feeling that I have here wherever I go. I can defray my own little expenses here, and if I get tired of one place, I can go to a dozen others that suit me just as well. There is no pulling and criticizing here. Everybody leaves

everybody alone. There is no "You ought to do this" or "You ought to do that." No feeling that everybody does something and you are the only idle parasite in the crowd. There is no "There is such a field for you here, and you could do so much here; Why don't you lecture and hold classes?; Why don't you meet people?"; and all that rot. I am not fit for these things and I know it. I want to live somewhere hidden in a jungle as I do here, if possible, with a few friends and a few books and free from financial care. And that is what really the girls would like best and could have here if they had the courage to do it. But they are still at the stage of wanting to please the swamis: "What will the swamis say?; Isn't it our duty?"; etc. And even then they would have all their duties and pleasing of swamis and teaching and be perfectly happy and keep their health, if they would go about it in a sensible way as the missionaries do.

So come along and I will make you perfectly comfortable, and you will be in heaven for a while.

Almora, September 26, 1924

Mrs. Cooke Again

Mrs. Cooke, who had fever all the time in the plains, had not had it at all up here. It is really a wonderful climate and beautiful scenery. But the girls are not in a mood to appreciate anything at present. They are so run down.

Mrs. Cooke, however, seems very happy here. She was born in India and loves the country, though she spent many years in England. Though much younger, she seems more mature mentally than the girls are. That is, she has things in a clearer light and does not take them in such a personal sense. Neither is she deluded. She knows India better than the girls do, even the dark side. But her love overcomes much. She has a deeper nature, more like Mira's, and sees things as a whole—not only as they affect her personally—at least, so it seems to me. Her attitude is that a mother loves her children even though they are naughty and scold her and are rude to her. And with it, is it not all the Mother's play? Are we not all part of Her?

Her husband holds a high position with the railway, and at home they have to entertain a great deal. But even with the

English she makes no secret of her love for India and the people. And that requires strength in India. So I consider her to be a rather remarkable woman like Miss MacLeod and Mrs. Sevier, who both have the capacity to rise above the personal aspect and are not so easily swayed by praise and blame.

Almora, April 5, 1925

Mrs. Cooke is now painting. She has done our ashrama and portraits of two swamis. The swamis like her and feel at home with her. She is not at all fussy. They sit in her room and read silently while she paints or does needlework. And they have the run of the house. She loves India and seems happy as people are happy—in other words, not miserable. But she is fully aware of the limitations of India and her people. What she likes here is freedom from social obligations. At her home in Poona, she has to play the game as the wife of an Englishman in a fairly high position—district freight manager of the railroad. She has to go to the club, play bridge, and entertain. I have never before met a person who reminds me so much of Mira. In face and movements she reminds me of Grete, only her face is very animated like Mira's. She is about 36, has two children in school in England, but is very youthful for all that. So, she is quite a contrast from the girls. Of course, the swamis like the girls too, but in a different way.

Almora, July 30, 1925

I will miss Mrs. Cooke when I go back to Almora. She is a cheerful creature, and I always had a cup of tea and a little chat with her in the morning. Now she has moved three miles from our ashrama, which means she is altogether out of my reach. She was my only Western contact in India. And through her I got news about others. Now she is very busy with her students' home.

Almora, November 27, 1930

It is strange how Mrs. Cooke could become a Muslim after all these years with the swamis. And even now she sees

everything through the Vedantic mind. She reads Vedanta into the Koran. But in such cases it is almost always circumstances that lead to the change more than religious conviction. The simplicity also may have appealed. It seems to me much like the Old Testament religion: Believe in one God and in the Koran revealed by Him—Allah the Merciful. Mrs. C. will be alone with the Mohammedan youth who adores her and nurses her through her repeated illnesses. It is fortunate she has someone who looks after her. She suffers from terrible headaches and pain in her back. The swamis used to look after her, but now she has cut off connection with our Mission, so they rarely go to see her. I think it is only a passing change in her attitude, but who knows? Perhaps after a year or two, she will wake up and realize that it all was a mistake—that Islam has nothing to offer that she could not have found in Hinduism. "We learn only through experience," Swamiji said. Swami Saradananda, her guru, has given her over to Sri Ramakrishna, so it is not for us to judge. May our faith in him increase as the years go by.

Almora, April 25, 1934

The Car Festival

Today is the great festival day of the car of Jagannath at Puri. The saying is that whosoever sees the Lord Jagannath on the car today will not be born again. The Vedantists, however, explain that the car is the human body, and that whosoever sees the Lord seated in his own heart will not be born again.

One of the swamis told me a story about Lord Jagannath. A devotee worshipped him as his friend. The Lord would come to him in human form and walk and talk and play with him. One day the Lord said, "I have seen a beautiful ripe jackfruit in a garden. Let us go in the night and steal it." The devotee said, "No, if the gardener catches me, he will give me a good beating. You need not fear, for you are God. You can easily get away. But it is different with me." The Lord said, "No, you need not fear. It is a delicious fruit. We must steal it." So they went into the garden at night and stole the fruit. But the gardener heard the noise and caught the devotee. The Lord escaped and returned to his image in the temple. But to help

his devotee, he gave a dream to one of the priests in which the whole story was told, and the priest was told to rescue the devotee. So he did. He explained to the gardener his dream, and the devotee was not only let off without a beating, but he was worshipped as a close friend of the Lord. And in memory of this event, the first ripe jackfruit of that garden is offered to Lord Jagannath every year, even today.

Almora, June 22, 1925

The Rainy Season

We are now in the rainy season, and the cloud formations are wonderful. It is really very beautiful here, but one must be in the right state of mind to appreciate beauty. This is the place to read Kalidas or any Indian poet. Valmiki is rich in descriptions of nature. The similes are often farfetched, but they don't seem so farfetched here as they would seem in other parts—level lands where the clouds are way up in the sky. Here we see them below us, on the same level, and above—a closer contact. We see them getting their being, floating for some time, and again dissolving. They assume a certain individuality. They climb a mountain, cross a summit, and come down again. And we see sunshine, showers, mists, clouds, all at the same time in different parts of the mountains. Nature provides us with shows and movies, the only kind we have here and our only diversion.

Almora, July 30, 1925

Mother's Calmer Aspects

You know how I love solitude and open country. I never liked crowds and crowded places. The ashrama life here is just what suits me—comfort and perfect freedom. The whole upper storey is really mine, with a wide veranda and bathroom. Swami Turiyananda's room is next to mine, and sometimes one of the swamis reads there aloud in Sanskrit, which I love to hear. The food and climate are excellent, and the scenery charming. So the gods are good to me. But this could not have prevented me from coming home, if I felt that the

time was ripe. But Mother seems to say, "Not yet." Let the girls go this year, and I may come later. Who knows?

I will go to the plains with the girls, but I don't know how far. Probably to Calcutta, and maybe from there to Bombay. But it is a long journey. In Bombay we have a center, and the swami-in-charge is an old friend who was the editor at Mayavati when we were there. He would arrange everything for the girls and, with other swamis, see them off on the steamer. We expect to leave Almora at the end of November, and they may sail Dec. 15 or, at the latest, Jan. 15.

The girls are feeling much better. I see them usually in the morning and have a cup of coffee and toast with them, though my breakfast in my room is over. Now that things are so much more pleasant for them here, they seem not quite so happy at the prospect of leaving. But I hope they will be contented in America. But the India germ gets into the blood, and I think they will, after some time, wish they were back here. However, one can never tell. If they find a nice place in America, they may be perfectly contented there. They love the swamis, though they don't always approve of them or their ways. They enjoy the class very much, and they hear much about Vedanta. They certainly have learned many, many things here, and it has been an invaluable experience, though not always pleasant.. Now they will see the Mother's play in the West again—jazz, radio, autos, movies, phonographs, efficiency, rush and hurry, and all the marvels of the West. It will be a great change after easy-going, mild India.

Personally, I prefer Mother's calmer aspects. I love our little river way down in the valley, and miles and miles of hills—tier after tier—ending in snow-capped mountains, and the rosy clouds drifting along below my veranda, and giant eagles floating on their wings, circling in the air till they look like tiny dark spots against the heavens. And the birds singing in the pines and the monkeys stealing our apples and the cowherds playing their flutes and the villagers working their little fields—all this is a joy to me that I can enjoy from my room window or veranda. Then, no noise, no confusion—everyone quietly going about his business, each one of us in our own way, without criticizing or interfering with the others.

Still, all are friendly. This is my life here. And I only wish you could enjoy it with me.

Almora, October 13, 1925

Karma Bhumi

When you give my love to Kalyani, tell her that if she had invited me to live in the country, she would have roused my interest. But, Mother, save me from conducting a Vedanta circle in L.A. proper. No circles for me, please. Our little dot will do, a tiny place in the woods or in the mountains. The Himalayas have spoiled me for city life, and India, for "polite society." If you doubt the latter, ask the girls. I often shock them with my rude, bad Indian manners.* No, you had better all come here and see a new phase of life. You know, Swamiji says, "India is the *karma bhumi*, the land where every soul must come to pay its last debt." So you may as well come now. I will get a nice bungalow for you all.

Almora, October 13, 1925

Comings and Goings

Tagore [Rabindranath] and some of his family have come to Almora. They have taken a bungalow for the summer. I saw him at Boshi's. He had just arrived and was very tired from the long and hot journey from Calcutta—one day and two nights on the train, and then eighty-four miles in a car over the mountain road. He is seventy-five years old and rather weak on his feet. He has a nice appearance. Boshi went to meet him and took him to his house to rest, as the others had not yet arrived. They brought a dynamo and put up electric fittings in their bungalow. Boshi and Gertrude knew him. I remember you heard him lecture in America.

Almora, May 2, 1937

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*Gurudas Maharaj was obviously speaking tongue-in-cheek, as he well remembered Swami Turiyananda's conversation with him on manners (see page 53).

We are having cold, wet weather but no snow so far, though the surrounding hills are all white with snow. California will soon have its wild flowers. How I would love to see the Shanti Ashrama again at that time.

Well, Ujjie, let us remember that true beauty and happiness are in the soul.

Almora, February 12, 1938

I have seen Bhakti [Helen Rubel] twice in her cottage, and I have invited her and the Boshis for tea in the ashrama for Easter Sunday. I like her. She lives very simply and does almost all her work herself, which is really far easier than having to struggle with a servant who doesn't understand you. And there is so little to do if one lives alone. She seems so sensible: first of all, to come up here to this fine climate, and then to leave alone all unnecessary things—just a quiet, isolated, meditative life, making the best of her opportunity. She looks healthy but her digestion is weak, so her food is also simple.

Almora, April 16, 1938

The Town

Almora has one long business street (bazaar), little shops and dwelling houses, one good general store where English and a few American canned goods are sold. All stores are run by Hindus and Mohammedans. Population about 15 thousand. No gas or electricity. But there are a few automobiles and a daily motorbus service to Kathgodam (84 miles), the nearest rail station.

Almora, July 19, 1938

Kankhal

New Year's Day and Holi

As you wrote me on the Christian New Year's Day, I thought it would be nice to answer you on the Hindu New Year's Day, today being the first of the year 1325 of the Hindu calendar. The counting of years is supposed to have begun with the reign of King Vikramaditya who collected to his court the nine gems of India, of which Kalidas was one. What a glorious time that must have been. They do not make much of New Year's here, except that there is some religious ceremony and feasting. But no whistles or bell-ringing or any of the innocent foolishness of New Year's Eve in the West. They have that on other occasions.

Holi is a great day here. Sri Krishna played with the *gopis* on that day, so there is a great deal of liberty between the young people on that day, especially throwing colored water at each other or red powder. Everybody is subject to these practical jokes on that day. In the Math it is quite a noisy affair—everybody throwing colored water on everybody else, at least the younger folks. And then there is a great feast.

Kankhal, April 14, 1918

A Sleepy Town

Well, here I am in Kankhal again after five years, this time with P. [Pelikan, or Prashanta, was a Shanti-ashramite]. It is much quieter here than at Benares—no pilgrims at present and not many *sadhus*. Kankhal is a sleepy town. We have been to Hardwar and Rishikesh—beautiful places. The Ganges is so pure here, one can see the bottom of the river and the fish swimming, blue-greenish water and the mountains covered with trees—not bare as in Almora. P. is charmed with Rishikesh, and he may go and live there for some time. The *sadhus* have their separate huts, and they get their *bhiksha* (food) from the *kshatrams* (public kitchens). Lovely as it is, it seems not quite as attractive to me as it used to be—hardly the Rishikesh of my article in *Asia*.

Two years ago, Rishikesh was swept away by a flood and seventy *sadhus* perished. Now their huts are further removed

from the Ganges. There were probably two hundred *sadhus* there. We went in a car—a two-hours' drive from here, mostly through forest. Two swamis of our ashrama accompanied us. The place is, of course, ideal for *sadhus*.

Kankhal, January 17, 1929

The Kumbha Fair

The Kumbha fair at Hardwar is over. In our Kankhal ashrama there were 500 guests, 125 swamis of our Mission. The procession of *sadhus* was grand—the heads of monasteries on elephants and palanquins, bands playing. There were more than 25 thousand *sadhus* of all descriptions, male and female. Our *sadhus* also were in the procession. They all had their bath in the Ganges.

Almora, April 16, 1938

Barlowganj

A Simple Life

Your home life seems to be simple. I love a simple life now. I am perfectly satisfied to stay at home with my books and a little walk in the evening. And we have a few friends whom we see. My companion-swami does the buying, cooking, and housework. He is very active. I wash my own clothing and make my own breakfast and afternoon tea. Sometimes we have friends for dinner or tea, but not often. We also go to them occasionally. Now we are about to return to Kishenpur as it is beginning to get cold. I am very sensitive to heat and cold now. Rather strange, as I have lived so much in extreme climates and did not mind it. Of course, it is a question of low vitality, though I take good, nourishing food: milk, egg, sometimes meat or fish, and a great variety of vegetables—more than we have in the West. Many Westerners are feeling as I do. If you ever come to Benares to get *mukti* [liberation], you will understand what India is like. The summer there is unbearable, but it is nice in the winter.

Barlowganj, November 1, 1941

Benares

City of Shiva

After your prolonged silence, you don't deserve a letter from this sacred place, the holy of holies in India. But a *sannyasin* ought not to give a bad example, so I will overlook your wickedness, and let me confess, in the hope that it may make an impression on your stony heart.

Benares is the city of Shiva and his spouse Annapurna, the goddess of Providence. The belief is that Annapurna provides food in plenty for all her devotees who come to Benares. So the village saying is that "no one need starve at Kashi." There Shiva also rules supreme. He is the only Guru here; so when the *mantra* initiation takes place, it is done outside the city. It is also the belief that whosoever—saint or sinner—dies at Benares, goes to heaven. And the place is full of old people who want to spend their last years here.

It is a wonderful place. One sees temples here everywhere: some minute little things, shrines, little niches in the walls—all holding the Shiva *linga*—little places of worship where a little Ganges water and a few flowers are offered. Thus one is constantly reminded of Shiva, the great Deliverer. Everywhere there are flowers and flower garlands, mostly jasmine and marigolds. People wear garlands, they offer garlands, they place them around the necks of cows and bulls—even the carriage drivers have them on the horses. It is like an eternal feast of worship. And for many centuries this has been going on, no one knows. Buddha is said to have given his first discourse here after his illumination. Even then, Kashi (as the Hindus call Benares) was an ancient city. No wonder there is an atmosphere here. And part of the city certainly looks ancient; mazes of serpentine lanes, some not more than five feet wide, with high buildings three or four storeys, which seem at most to meet at the top. The sun never shines in these narrow lanes, lined with shops and crowded with people. After the quiet of the Himalayas, I enjoy the crowds—their noise and shouting and bargaining—and the shops where they are at work, all open, some not more than holes in the wall where a boy or man just fits in crosslegged selling his rosaries, spices, or other trifles. Other shops are a mass of copper and brass

articles or funny toys. It is surprising what the people accomplish with their crude implements in a narrow space with the poorest of lights. I sometimes wonder that they have any eyes left.

Then there is the Ganges with the bathing steps, priests, lecturers, performers, meditating brahmins, worshipping pilgrims, loiterers, beggars, cows, a jumble and confusion, people after their bath in dripping wet clothing, shivering and mumbling prayers or counting their beads. Priests have wooden platforms on the bathing ghats where they sit under huge umbrellas made of straw and bamboo and where the pilgrims repeat *mantras* instructed by the priests, and perform the bath according to scriptural rules. After the bath, the priest places a little vermillion or sandalpaste between their eyebrows and guides them to other places, five in number, where the bath is repeated. These are specially holy places.

Then begins the long round of temples; each temple has a history to make it specially sacred. And the very pious make the route of fifty miles on foot, enclosing all that is sacred. Before this begins, however, the entire head and face are shaven for the considerable price of four cents. I had a simple shave—only face—the other day and paid only two cents.

I have a comfortable little room in the House of Service where my food is brought; and tea, I make myself in the morning and afternoon. We have a temple room where worship of Sri Ramakrishna takes place, another little temple for Swamiji, and a room for the late Latu Maharaj, whose name you remember from the Gospel. Swami Turiyananda's room is now occupied, as all his earthly belongings were taken to a room at the Almora ashrama, which he had started. There are many swamis here, and I have interesting talks with them. But for my walks, I prefer to be alone and wander about in the lanes and back lanes or along the Ganges, taking in the sights at leisure.

Benares, December 16, 1924

Closer Feeling

Here that closer feeling with animal life is inborn. That is why Hindus don't have that terrible feeling about transmigra-

tion that we have. The barrier is not so great as we think—the same feelings, the same passions, just as clever in their way as we are in our way (that is, in getting what they want). Only the wants differ. About their intellectual life (pure thinking beyond direct physical wants), we know nothing—their joy of just living, being alive, their joy in the beauty of nature, etc. But only the other day at Almora, I saw a monkey sitting on a high rock, quietly taking in the exquisite beauty of the scene, the valley deep below, and the snows in the distance. He seemed to be fascinated by it. The same is true of the hill people here. People always say, "These people don't appreciate the beauty they live in." But why is it that they always take their rests at the loveliest spots? They may not talk about it, but they do it instinctively. A coolie comes laboring along under a beastly load. He puts down his load to rest, and it is always at the most beautiful spot. There is really a close bond between all life. And often those who express it least, feel it most. To the East, it seems a little vulgar to gush about the beauty of nature. They take it in silently and reverently, perhaps, folding their hands in salutation of a river flowing at some distance, or a mountain peak glittering in the sunlight, then passing on without a word.

Benares, December 19, 1925

EPILOGUE

[Gurudas Maharaj's mention of the Hindus' silent reverence for beauty was also brought out in an incident that occurred during his 1915 pilgrimage to Kedar-Badri with Swami Prabhavananda. The following account of that moment of reverence was later recorded by Swami Prabhavananda in his article "A Pilgrimage to Kedar-Badri" (published posthumously in the March 1979 issue of the Prabuddha Bharata*).]*

[illegible] looking young priest, about twenty to twenty-four [illegible] beckoned to me. He said: "Ask your friends to come [illegible]." He took us to a side of the temple where it [illegible] crowded. When he opened the temple door, some [illegible] wanted to enter also, but he told them: "No, it [illegible]." The four of us went in with him, and he closed [illegible] behind us.

[illegible] the peculiar thing. Generally a priest stands to [illegible] front, facing the deity. But this priest stood in [illegible] deity, facing us, which is never done. We stayed [illegible] *darshan* (view of the deity). After a few minutes [illegible]: "Have you had enough *darshan*?" We came [illegible] priest did not leave the temple. He closed the [illegible]

[illegible] seated with the pilgrims. Another man beck- [illegible] "Ask your friends to come with me. The head [illegible] to see you."

[illegible] the head priest with great courtesy made us [illegible] in Hindi about Gurudas Maharaj: "To [illegible] this man belong?" I knew a little Hindi, and I [illegible] no right to inquire about the race or [illegible]." The head priest replied: "I know, but [illegible] America?" He explained that he him- [illegible] Gurudas Maharaj looked white, other people [illegible] for him. If they saw him entering the [illegible] he would [illegible] a large sum of money to have [illegible] purified. The [illegible] priest asked the three of us not to go into the temple [illegible] as we ate with Gurudas Maharaj. But [illegible] very kind [illegible]. Every hour he would wave the [illegible] lights before the deity and would let us watch from [illegible] time he would not permit other pilgrims [illegible] the temple. After we had our *darshan* he [illegible] the other pilgrims to go inside. We never told him or [illegible] else there that we had already been inside the [illegible]

[illegible] three days and three nights the four of us were practi- [illegible] of the head priest. He arranged for our stay in a [illegible] and [illegible] the best temple *prasad* (consecrated [illegible]

There were about seven or eight priests at Badrinarayan, and we met them all; but we never saw the young priest again who had conducted us into the temple when we first arrived.

From Badrinarayan, on the way back to Mayavati, Sitapati Maharaj, Gurudas Maharaj and I stopped at Almora, where Swami Turiyananda was then staying in the Ramakrishna Kutir. We did not know where in Almora the Kutir was located. Although we had been told that it was somewhere beside the road, we happened to come to just the right place. I had begun to call loudly, "Swami Turiyanandaji Maharaj, Swami Turiyanandaji Maharaj!" It was early in the morning. The Swami had been warming himself by a fire, dressed only in a *kaupin* (loincloth). As soon as he heard my voice, he came running outside into the cold to meet me. Think of his love! Then he took me by the hand and led me to the Kutir, and Gurudas Maharaj and Sitapati Maharaj also came. He gave us a warm room.

We stayed with Swami Turiyananda for three days, and we told him the story of our pilgrimage. When he heard about our first *darshan* at Badrinarayan, when the young priest had taken us inside the temple, he became excited and exclaimed: "You foolish boys, don't you realize that it was the Lord Himself who came in this garb and took you inside? Didn't you recognize Him?"

APPENDIX A

SWAMI TURIYANANDA'S PASSING*

Ramakrishna Mission
Home of Service, Luxa,
Benares City,
July 27th, 1922

My dear Gurudas Maharaj,

I have already informed you by a cable about the *mahasamadhi* of our much revered Hari Maharaj, which took place on Friday last at 6:45 P.M. It was beyond our dreams that he would so soon leave us for good. We were entertaining a little hope about his recovery, due to the better condition of his ailments during the last 3 or 4 days. He gave us indications of his pending *mahasamadhi*, for which he was getting prepared, but we could not even then realize the full import of them. He gave up all desires for food and medicine and resigned himself completely unto the Lord. With his supernatural power of the mind, he bore all pains and sufferings without a word. His physical prostration increased day by day, and we would often think that he might give up his body in an unconscious state. But a few minutes before that he looked altogether a changed man and entered into *mahasamadhi* uttering distinctly the name of the Lord. That was a heavenly sight! How can I describe it!!

The night previous to his *mahasamadhi* he said aloud, "Last day, the last day." Early in the morning he wished Swami

* The following letter has been lightly edited in order to conform to the style of this book.

Akhandanandaji "Good morning" a number of times. That was not his usual practice. Sometime after, he repeatedly said, "We belong to the Mother, and Mother belongs to us. Say this, please say this." He saluted the great Mother uttering the famous *mantra*, "*Sarvamangala mangalye*," etc. He did likewise at noon as also in the afternoon. After a time he said, "His will be done. His will is being fulfilled whether man knows it or not."

At times his tone became uncommonly soft and affectionate. He said, "Sanat, unfasten my bandage. Unfasten my bandage. What are these things?" When this was done, he said, "Well done, you have done the right thing." Addressing Sanat Maharaj again he said, "Let me go. If you allow me to go, I can give up all anxiety." Sanat Maharaj said, "Please rest satisfied; you can do as you please." A little after he said, "Is everything finished?" Sanat Maharaj answered, "Yes, Maharaj."

Hari Maharaj: "Then I go, then I go." Sanat became silent.

In the evening when his dressing was finished, he was talking in English and we heard him uttering your name: "Gurudas! Gurudas!" and some other names. He said something inaudibly but we could not catch it. Probably he blessed you in his last hours. In the morning he called, "Sarat, Sarat" (Saradananda Swami) a number of times. Finding him restless, Swami Akhandanandaji asked him to sleep for some time. He said in reply, "Yes, I want that." A short while after, he asked one of his *sevaks* seated near him, "Can you make me get up?"

Sevak: "Maharaj, it might give you more pain."

Hari Maharaj: "That is a mistake on your part. Who else is here? Sanat! Make me sit up." That was done but he could not remain in that position for a long time. He then said, "Can you give me strength? Can you give me strength? Make me sit erect; make me sit erect." He himself tried to do the same. Noticing his turned up eyes and long breath, he was made to lie down, much against his wishes. He kept silent for a while then said, "Lord, Lord. Om Ramakrishna. Om Ramakrishna. Ramakrishna, my soul. *Harer namaiva kavalam*," etc. ("Hari's name, the only solace"). Then again he said, "Make me sit up."

the meantime, Dr. B. K. Bose, the attending physician, e and offered a small dose of brandy to Maharaj, which he ed to drink. The doctor said, "I am Doctor, please drink eing annoyed at this, he sternly said, "Who are you?"

eing his condition then, we gave him Thakur's *charan-a* which he drank quietly but repeatedly showed his rness to sit up in his favorite *dhyana* posture. Finding his es not fulfilled, he said, "Body is falling down; *prana* is out; make my legs straight; make my hands fold near my ead." When that was done he bowed saying, "Jai ideva, Jai Gurudeva, Jai Ramakrishna, Jai Ramakrishna." dded, "Everything is true, everything is true. *Prana* is lished in Truth. Say '*Satyaswarup*' [of the nature of n]." Everyone said, "*Satyaswarup*." He again said, *aswarup*" [of the nature of Knowledge]. Everyone said, *aswarup*."

mediately after this, Swami Akhandanandaji uttered l, "*Satyam jnanam anantam brahma*." Being pleased with words, Maharaj repeated them. Swami Akhandanandaji said, "*Satyam jnanam anantam brahma prajnanam dam brahma*" ["Brahman is Truth, Knowledge, and Infin- rahman is Consciousness and Bliss"]. Hearing *mantras* he "*Byas*" ("Very well") and entered into *mahasamadhi*. No of pain and anguish were visible on his face. It was filled heavenly bliss. At the time of his approaching *samadhi*, the *sadhus* and all present chanted the name of hakur: "Jai Ramakrishna, Jai Ramakrishna."

en it was made sure that he had departed from his mor- ame, his holy body was tastefully decorated with flowers arlands and the whole night was spent in *bhajan*, recita- of the Gita, Upanishads, etc. In the morning (i.e. Satur- at 8:30 A.M., his body was again decorated with fresh ds, flowers, sandalpaste, and *vibhuti*. And when the *ka* ceremony was over, a procession of *sadhus*, *brah-aris*, and *bhaktas*, all chanting the name of God Shiva, ed his holy bier to the bank of the Ganges. His body was to the Manikarnika Ghat by a big boat and it, being tied slab of stone, was consigned to the midstream at A.M. after *snan*, *puja*, *bhoga*, and *aratrika* were finished.

In honor of his memory, a special *puja* will be performed and *samashti*, *sadhu bhandara*, poor *narayan*, and *bhakta seva* will take place on Wednesday, the 2nd August 1922.

With my heartfelt sympathy for you in your bereavement,

Yours ever,

Dhrubeswarananda

APPENDIX B

CHRONOLOGY

	EVENTS
ary 1870	Gurudasa was born as Cornelius J. Heijblom [Heyblom].
1898	Gurudasa met Swami Abhedananda.
1899	Gurudasa received *brahmacharya* from Swami Abhedananda.
st 1899	Swami Turiyananda came to America with Swami Vivekananda, on his second visit to the West.
1899	Gurudasa met Swami Turiyananda, who was deputed by Swamiji to assist Swami Abhedananda at the New York center.
0	Swami Turiyananda arrived in San Francisco.
t 1900- ry 1901	Swami Turiyananda took 8 students to the Shanti Ashrama (Altogether 13 students attended Swami Turiyananda's first stay at the Ashrama).
ecember 1900	Gurudasa arrived at the Shanti Ashrama (from the Lord's Farm) for the first time.
ry 1901	Swami Turiyananda left the Shanti Ashrama for San Francisco.

25 April 1901	Swami Turiyananda returned to the Shanti Ashrama for the second time.
September 1901	Swami Turiyananda left Shanti Ashrama for Lake Donner, San Francisco, Los Angeles, the mountains, and Catalina.
8 January 1902	Swami Turiyananda returned to Shanti Ashrama for the third time.
1 June 1902	Swami Turiyananda left Shanti Ashrama for the last time.
6 June 1902	Swami Turiyananda set sail for India.
2 January 1903	Swami Trigunatita arrived in San Francisco.
1903-1914	In July or November every year, Swami Trigunatita selected students to go with him for a one-month's stay at Shanti Ashrama.
August 1905	The cornerstone was laid for the Hindu Temple, San Francisco.
August 1906	Swami Prakashananda arrived in San Francisco as the assistant swami.
circa 1906-1912	Gurudasa lived in India.
1909	Swami Trigunatita started *The Voice of Freedom*.
1911	Gurudasa received initiation from Holy Mother.
circa 1913-1914	Gurudasa returned to Shanti Ashrama.
December 1914-circa 1918	Gurudasa returned to India for a second stay.

10 January 1915	Swami Trigunatita's *mahasamadhi*.
early 1916	Swami Prakashananda became the head of the San Francisco center.
early 1919-December 1922	Gurudasa returned again to the Shanti Ashrama.
21 July 1922	Swami Turiyananda's *mahasamadhi*.
December 1922	Gurudasa returned to India to live (He travelled to India with Swami Prakashananda and the Fox sisters).
18 February 1923	Gurudasa received *sannyasa* from Swami Abhedananda, who gave him the name Swami Atulananda.
June 1923	Swami Prakashananda returned to America from India with his new assistant Swami Prabhavananda.
13 February 1927	Swami Prakashananda's *mahasamadhi*.
June 1927-June 1929	Swami Madhavananda served as the head of the Vedanta Society in San Francisco.
10 August 1966	Gurudas Maharaj's *mahasamadhi*.

APPENDIX C

LIST OF NAMES

*Sanskrit Names Given at the Shanti Ashrama**

SANSKRIT	TRANSLATION	NAME
Shraddha	Trust	Mrs. Stanley
Sadhu-Charan	Following in the footsteps of the sages	Mr. Roorbach
Dhira	Steady, thoughtful	Mrs. Petersen
Sthitadhi	Established understanding	Dr. Logan
Saravamsaha	All enduring	Miss Boock
Kalyani	One who wishes well to all	Miss Aspinall
Chetana	Sentient, conscious of the real Self	Miss Bell
Ujjvala	Bright one, an upward flaming fire	Ida Ansell
Santosha	Contentment	Mrs. Jackson
Vivikta	One living in solitude after particular discrimination	Dr. Chandler
Shankari	One who does well	Miss Gould
Sumati	One who means well	Miss McConochie
Gurudasa	One who serves the guru	Mr. Heijblom (Heyblom)

* The above names (except Gurudasa) were given during the first stay at the Shanti Ashrama. The first ten were given August 3-13, 1900, and in the order named, Shraddha receiving hers on Mt. Hamilton, on the way to the Ashrama.

List of Members of the San Francisco Vedanta Center, 1 March 1903[*]

SANSKRIT	TRANSLATION	NAME
Annapurna	Goddess of spiritual food	Mrs. Hulda Johnson
Bhaktimati	Full of piety and devotion	Mrs. Margaret Taaffe
Dhira	Steady, thoughtful, the true nature of Atman	Mrs. Bertha Petersen
Eka-Nishtha	True to One	Mr. Frederick Hood
Gopika	Unselfish maiden friend of God	Miss Charlotte Brown
Haripriya	Ardent lover of Lord Hari	Mrs. Mary Nelson
Karmavira	Hero in Karma Yoga	Mr. Albert Wollberg
Kunti	Lover of the Cross and God	Mrs. Ellen Wilson
Madhavi	Wife of Lord Madhava (Hari)	Mrs. Margaret Whelan
Mira	Queen Ascetic	Mrs. Magee
Nandini	Gladness	Miss Caroline Yoerk
Nirbhika	Fearless	Mr. James Baar
Niriha	The innocent	Mrs. Clara Harvey
Nirmala	The pure	Mr. Carl Petersen
Nirmama	"Nothing belongs to me"	Mr. Louis Juhl
Nishchala	Never oscillating	Mr. Alexander Petersen
Nishkama	Desireless	Mr. Clinton French
Nivritti	Cessation of all desires	Mrs. Agnes Rhode-hamel
Pipasita	Thirsting after love of God	Mrs. Mary Hawkins
Prasuti	Mother to all	Mrs. Wollberg
Premika	Ardent lover of God	Miss Sarah Fox
Radhika	Goddess of love	Miss Rebecca Fox

[*] Sanskrit names are listed alphabetically.

Sahachari	Companion of God	Mrs. Katherina Renkin
Sajjana	Very good and honest person	Mr. Ernest Brown
Sarala	Sincere and simple-hearted soul	Mrs. Cara French
Saraswati	Goddess of learning and wisdom	Miss Mary McComas
Satya-Nishtha	To Truth and Truth alone	Mr. Francis Rhodehamel
Savitri	Ideal wife	Mrs. Alberta Hood
Shankari	Well-doer	Miss Fanny Gould
Shraddha	Faith	Mrs. Agnes Stanley
Sumati	Always thinking and meaning well	Miss McConochie
Udasina	Unattached	Mr. Mathias Johnson
Ujjvala	Bright one, effulgent, and upward flaming fire	Miss Ida Ansell
Vivikta	Lover of solitude	Dr. Lucy Chandler
Yashoda	Mother of Sri Krishna, the God of Love	Mrs. Helena Ansel
Yogapriya	Lover of Yoga	Miss Kate Brady

APPENDIX D

UJJVALA'S DAILY PROGRAM

Old Program

[In 1905, Ujjvala received Swami Turiyananda's written permission to accept spiritual instruction from Swami Trigunatita, his successor as the head of the San Francisco center. The following daily programs which Ujjvala wrote out and submitted to the new swami for correction are examples of the type of instruction she received from him. Swami Trigunatita's comments are written in bold:]

PROGRAM OF WORK

All the reading and studying I do at a desk which I made on the porch, so [I] am out of doors all the time.

A.M.	
5:30-5:50	Get up—dress, etc.
5:50-6:00	Meditate **1/2 [hour]**.
6:00-6:15	Chop or saw wood.
6:15-6:45	Breakfast.
6:45-7:30	Housework (dishwashing, etc.)
7:30-8:00	1/2 [hour] Reading. **What? The other items have descriptions, and why not this important one?**
8:00-10:30	Work in Orchard (Pick or pack fruit).
10:30-11:00	Rest and change clothes.
11:00-11:30	1/2 [hour] Read **What [?]** and meditate. **How long?**
11:30-12:00	Help get dinner.

P.M.	
12:00-12:30	Dinner.
12:30-1:30	Housework (Dishes and bed-making).
1:30-2:00	Sanskrit.
2:30-3:00	Rest.
3:00-4:00	**1** [hour] Study. **What?**
4:00-5:00	Work in garden.
5:00-5:30	**1/2** [hour] Write letters. **Everyday writing letters! to whom?**
5:30-6:00	Get the eggs, set table, etc.
6:00-7:00	Supper.
7:00-7:30	Dishes.
7:30-8:30	Free for anything.
8:30-8:45	Meditate. **15 min.**
8:45-9:00	Prepare for bed.
9:00-9:30	Read in bed (Swami V's [Vivekananda] books).
9:30-5:30	Sleep.

Corrected Program

A.M.	
5:30-5:45	Get up—dress, etc.
5:45-6:00	Meditate.
6:00-6:15	Chop or saw wood.
6:15-6:45	Breakfast.
6:45-7:30	Housework (Dishwashing, etc.)
X 7:30-8:30	Sanskrit (Grammar).
X 8:30-10:30	Work in Orchard.
X 10:30-11:00	Sanskrit (Gita).
X 11:00-11:15	Rest—change clothes, etc.
X 11:15-11:45	Read 10 min. Meditate 20 min.
X 11:45-12:00	Set table, etc.

P.M.

12:00-12:30	Dinner.
12:30-1:30	Housework (Dishes and beds).
1:30-2:30	Sanskrit (Primer).
X 2:30-3:30	Sanskrit (Gita).
X 3:30-4:30	Work in garden.
X 4:30-5:00	Sanskrit (Gita).
X 5:00-5:30	Study English.
5:30-6:00	Get eggs—set table, etc.
6:00-7:00	Supper.
7:00-7:30	Dishes.
7:30-8:30	Free.
8:30-8:45	Meditate 15 min.
8:45-9:00	Prepare for bed.
9:00-9:30	Read Swami V's books.
9:30-5:30	Sleep.

[A note attached to this program reads as follows:]

Aug. 23, '10
Yes, Ujjvala, now it is alright. Wish you success. Please keep the routine inside your "Lesson" Book.
S.T. [Swami Trigunatita]

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6 6

With the Swamis in America and India is a collection of articles, letters, and reminiscences of Swami Atulananda, popularly known as Gurudas Maharaj among the monks and devotees of the Ramakrishna Order.

Swami Atulananda was born on February 7, 1870 in Amsterdam, Holland. His premonastic name was Cornelius J. Heijblom. He had the privilege of being in close contact with some of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.

Throughout the book and especially in his letters, where Gurudas Maharaj candidly opens his heart to his reader, we are able to find answers to the various problems affecting our life.

ADVAITA ASHRAMA
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